

Youth Select Committee

Oral evidence: Work Experience

Friday 13 July 2018

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Members present: Claudia Quinn (Chair), Mun Wu (Vice Chair), Caitlin O'Regan, Daria Eckert, Dominic Jones, George Pearce, Jack Payne, Jason Stewart, Max Parry, Sanah Kashyap, Zara Janahi.

Questions 212-305

Witnesses

I: Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils; **Sarah Horner**, Head of Policy and Communications, Learning and Work Institute; **Lauren Mistry**, Operations Director, Youth Employment UK; and **Rachael Saunders**, Education Director, Business in the Community.

II: Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE, Director, DHM & Associates Ltd.

III: Bhavina Bharkhada, Education and Skills Policy Adviser, EEF; **Robert Burley**, Director of Strategy, Public Affairs and Partnerships, vinspired; **Ashley Hodges**, Executive Director, Speakers for Schools; and **Steve Radley**, Policy Director, Construction Industry Training Board.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Youth Employment UK](#)
- [Business in the Community](#)
- [EEF](#)
- [vinspired](#)
- [Speakers for Schools](#)
- [CITB](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils; Sarah Horner, Head of Policy and Communications, Learning and Work Institute; Lauren Mistry, Operations Director, Youth Employment UK; and Rachael Saunders, Education Director, Business in the Community.

Q212 **Chair:** Good morning and welcome to this Youth Select Committee oral evidence session. Thank you for being here and giving your time to help us with our inquiry. If there is noise from outside today, we will carry on as best we can. Could the witnesses please introduce themselves?

Rachael Saunders: Hi. I'm Rachael Saunders. I am the education director at Business in the Community.

Lauren Mistry: I am Lauren Mistry, the operations director at Youth Employment UK.

Sarah Horner: I am Sarah Horner. I am head of policy and communications at the Learning and Work Institute.

Yolande Burgess: I am Yolande Burgess. I am the strategy director at London Councils.

Q213 **Chair:** We will start with the first question, which is for everyone. What is the purpose of work experience and what are the main things that young people should expect to get from it?

Rachael Saunders: Part of the purpose of work experience is obviously to inspire young people about the world of work, to help you think about what job you might want to do in the future. It is also useful in terms of attainment at school, because sometimes it can put your learning at school into context. It might become more obvious why it is worth studying a particular subject while at school when you can see that knowledge applied in the workplace. It is particularly invaluable when young people maybe do not have the social networks to get that experience of a work context through friends and family if a business or organisation can make that link to enable young people to have the widest possible range of experiences of the world of work and build their personal networks and social capital.

Lauren Mistry: I would echo a lot of what Rachael said. For us and our network of young people, work experience is about allowing young people the chance to explore the world of work, to make connections about their skills and what they are learning to their education environment and to bring that to life as well as to understand better the range of jobs carried out in organisations.

Young people should expect to learn. The opportunity they are provided with should be structured. There should be some expectations and

information set out in the beginning about what would be required. Young people should expect to be supported—they should have someone they can go to if they need support. They should have a thorough induction, and they should expect to give and receive feedback on their work experience, too, preferably with the opportunity to have a reference or statement of completion at the end of that.

Sarah Horner: I want to make similar points. I also want to echo the point that it can be a motivating factor for young people to do well in their exams, particularly if they are borderline. Evidence shows that if you are borderline for GCSE results it can spur you on to do better. With work experience, there is also a difference between whether you are in education and whether you are out of work. I do not know whether you are looking just at children at school or older people, but there is a difference in that.

I also wanted to note that it can play a role in getting you into university. This probably leads more to social mobility, which I can come back to, but it can have an impact on university admissions. It is something that universities can look for. If you have not had that experience, it can further entrench any disadvantage.

Yolande Burgess: I think it is about all of that, plus broadening horizons through the experiences of the world of work. As human beings, we emulate what we see and what is around us, so experiencing the world of work and seeing things that you had not seen before is trying to see the world through somebody else's eyes.

I note that some of the questions you ask are about 14 to 16-year-olds. In London, we are really promoting the idea of experiences of the world of work from primary school age, because we set the tone in our heads from a very young age. I believe you are seeing somebody from the Education and Employers charity later. They have a fantastic little video called "Redraw the Balance". It is shot in a primary-school setting. Twenty-two five-year olds—11 boys and 11 girls—are each asked to draw three pictures: one of a firefighter, one of an air force pilot and one of a surgeon. Sixty-one pictures were of men. They are five-year olds, so broadening horizons is so important. That is why I think when we are talking about experiences of the world of work it needs to start young.

Q214 **Chair:** Thank you. We will start with you, Yolande, for this one. As it stands, does work experience hope to improve social mobility?

Yolande Burgess: That rather depends. If your family has social capital and good networks, and your whole family is in employment, the likelihood is that you will get a reasonable work experience opportunity. If you are living in a family that has had generational unemployment, your options may be limited. Depending on how work experience is structured in your school—and it will be structured very differently in each school, because every school is responsible for its own careers work and guidance—you might be lucky. You might have somebody who is really good, who is working full-time on careers work and is able to broker really



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good work experience opportunities. You might not be lucky. It is a bit hit and miss.

From that perspective, it would be good to have more structure and more planning. Having talked to a lot of headteachers over the last couple of years, certainly their view is that what works for them, in terms of enabling social mobility, is if you have a full-time resource working on careers work right across the piece in a school, which could also include working directly with employers to broker good work experience opportunities. Then you genuinely have the opportunity to support families and young people who do not necessarily have that social capital or access to employers to experience things that they have not seen before. It needs structure, planning and resource.

Q215 Chair: I am really sorry to interject, but we have a lot of questions to get through, so if witnesses could try to be as brief as possible. Your evidence is really useful, but we are pushed for time.

Sarah Horner: I will just very quickly add to that then. Research shows that about half of work placements are currently sourced directly by pupils and families. If you do not have those networks, obviously you are going to miss out. Also, when people from lower socio-economic backgrounds do get a work placement, it is often at the more mundane level of the jobs market—again, enforcing inequality.

I want to make a particular point about young adult carers and children in care as well. It is even harder for them, because children in care may have no networks at all. Carers may be in workless households, and young adult carers are three times as likely to be NEET—not in education, employment or training—as other young people, so it is a big issue.

Q216 Zara Janahi: I will direct this question at Lauren and Sarah, if that's okay. Should all young people have the right to do work experience at 14 to 16, and/or 16 to 18?

Lauren Mistry: In short, yes; both those age groups should have those opportunities. We are expecting young people to make really big decisions and choices about their future, particularly with some of the changes in technical education that are on the way. Having no experience of work is a really difficult place to put a young person in, in terms of letting them make those decisions.

Also, there is a real decline in things like the Saturday job. There is a worrying climate for retail and restaurant workers as well. Young people need the safe space to be able to explore work. So we think so, yes.

Sarah Horner: I agree with everything you said, to make it easier. We think that both ages benefit. I would just make the point again that there needs to be active management of that. Otherwise, if you don't have a network, you are not going to get that opportunity.

Q217 Zara Janahi: Is there a risk of businesses becoming overwhelmed with the demand for work experience and placements?



Lauren Mistry: Undoubtedly yes, there is a risk that businesses will become overwhelmed. The careers strategy, the apprenticeship levy and the changes to technical education will all require businesses to reconsider how they are engaging with young people, particularly from a work-experience perspective. There is a risk of SME organisations—particularly the smaller ones—and perhaps those less experienced in it being overwhelmed by that. So yes, we would request, or hope, that a central best practice and defined process, as well as the tools and resources, were there to support all employers to be able to do that.

Sarah Horner: One thing I can share is that DFE are aware of this issue. We are actually doing some research for them on this—we are going to be publishing the results in the autumn. We are looking at what is out there—what already happens—and coming up with some suggestions about how best to help employers engage with that. The Government are aware of that issue.

Q218 **Caitlin O'Regan:** The other part of my question is about the other side of work experience, looking at businesses in particular. Without delving too deep into what you have already said about businesses being overwhelmed, is it easier now for businesses to offer work experience? How could barriers to offering work experience be reduced or removed for businesses?

Rachael Saunders: Some businesses have a really well-constructed work experience scheme, and that is something they have invested in. You heard from some young people from Robert Clack School in one of your previous sessions, who have been involved in Business Class, which is one of our programmes, and had work experience at Ford. Ford has a great relationship with the school. Ford has a well-constructed programme. That is a great example of something where it works really well. It tends to work particularly well where the business has an ongoing partnership with the school that covers a wide range of aspects of what the school does and where work experience is just one part of a broader partnership.

I give the example of Hogan Lovells, which has a particular emphasis on familiarising young people with the work environment, not jumping straight in. Young people have lots of particular experiences when they are there, but the first thing you do is just to make sure that people are used to working in an office. That is a really important part of it, especially for young people from different backgrounds who might not have been in an office before.

So there are definitely—particularly through big organisations—really well-constructed, clear schemes that young people can be part of. They are often over-subscribed, and it is often more challenging for a smaller organisation without the same level of resource to commit to constructing a work experience placement. There are a number of models. We have one, which has three parts: All About Me, Look Behind the Scenes, and Careers Happen. All About Me is about the young people's personal self-reflection, Look Behind the Scenes is about seeing literally behind the scenes in the business, and Careers Happen is about interviewing and



engaging with people within the business. That is one very simple framework. There are others, but frameworks like that help businesses to construct a worthwhile experience for young people.

Q219 Caitlin O'Regan: Following on from that, how can over-subscription, which seems to be the main barrier for most businesses, be reduced or removed?

Rachael Saunders: There are some online solutions. For example, Founders4Schools has a good tool. A young person might apply to a particular business that they know or they have heard of. They might get that placement, which is brilliant, but if they do not, the tool comes up with alternatives, ideally in the same sector and nearby geographically. That is one online tool—I think there are others. The bigger businesses that have a higher profile and everyone has heard of might be harder to get into, but you might be provided with an alternative that equally fits your needs. Those referrals onwards are often invaluable.

Q220 Caitlin O'Regan: Let me come to you for this one, Yolande. Lauren mentioned the fact that small and medium-sized enterprises can get really overwhelmed by offering work experience. How can the Government best support more small and medium-sized enterprises to offer work experience placements to young people?

Yolande Burgess: London Councils, through Ipsos MORI, undertook quite a wide-ranging survey with employers last year. We separated out the responses from large businesses and small and medium-sized employers. One of the things they said to us was, "We struggle to see the tasks that we can set for young people in SMEs." When we took that question a bit further with them, they basically said, "If you helped us plan it better, we could probably offer more work experience placements." We are back to structures and planning. That does put some pressure on schools to make sure that they are preparing young people to be ready for those work experience placements but also helping the employer to plan.

Q221 Chair: With regard to SMEs, we have repeatedly heard that lack of resources is a significant barrier. Could offering different forms of work experience beyond placements, such as careers talks, help overcome that barrier? How do you think they could be encouraged to do that?

Yolande Burgess: Yes, yes and yes. When I say the term "work experience" in front of a group of people a lot older than you, their eyes glaze over and you can see that they are thinking about the two weeks they spent making the tea, which is why we prefer to use the expression "experiences of the world of work". That is where you can involve employers.

You can do that in quite creative ways, particularly with small and medium-sized employers, so that is about careers talks and asking somebody to come in to talk to a class. I know a primary school teacher, and every time she teaches her year group about area in maths, she brings the local carpet layer in. That is a great way of involving a really small local business. There are creative ways of doing it. Encouraging the



middle managers of small and medium-sized employers to become governors is a way to get them involved in a school, for example. It is more about experiences of the world of work, which particularly allow small and medium-sized employers to become more involved.

Rachael Saunders: Can I add to that? A really well-constructed day can prove far more valuable than a less well-organised week spent in a business. Organising a day and taking a group of young people around different aspects of your business and giving them the chance for conversation and reflection can take less of everybody's time and energy and be far more valuable. Another suggestion I would make is that there are different forms of social action and volunteering where young people working alongside business volunteers can get to know each other and learn from each other. It might not always be in a business context, but building those networks and having those conversations is really valuable as well.

Q222 **Chair:** How do you think SMEs can be encouraged to do that from a governmental point of view?

Rachael Saunders: It is often about asking somebody to do something very specific, so if you say to an SME, "Please organise a work experience programme," it might think, "Oh my goodness, what is that?" But if there is an opportunity to attend for half a day and take part in an activity in a school or be part of a careers fair or a careers speed dating event—all the other more constructed and organised sessions—that is much a more manageable ask.

From September, as part of the careers strategy, there will be a careers lead teacher in every school. For the first time, that individual will have a named responsibility for a careers programme across the school. Hopefully there will be more opportunities to invite SMEs in particular for one-off experiences and engagement, rather than the onus being on them to organise a programme.

Q223 **Dominic Jones:** Lauren and Yolande, from the evidence submitted so far, we know that using personal networks to secure work-experience placements means that disadvantaged young people lose out. Has the time come to move away from using that method in schools, and if so, how is that best achieved?

Yolande Burgess: It probably is time—you are absolutely right. We have already touched on that. If you are disadvantaged, you are less likely to have access to those bigger networks. We have to guard against assumptions being made. Sarah made a really good point about the fact that if you are in a disadvantaged situation, sometimes your work experience opportunities can end up being—pardon the expression—mundane. If you have somebody structuring and managing work experience opportunities in a school, you need to make sure that that individual is thinking really widely, broadly and aspirationally for all the young people in that school. Although moving towards something more structured and planned is good, there probably also need to be some



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checks and balances in place to make sure that it works for every young person.

Lauren Mistry: Personally, I think it is time for an update of that system, rather than the complete removal of it. More needs to be done to broker those employer relationships. Arguably, if the work has been done to sign off one student to go in, and the structure is in place and the timeframes are there, how much more difficult is it to have two, three, four or five young people from those schools go in? Perhaps with the careers leads in schools who are due to come in, we can look at updating it and making sure that those employers are fully engaged, rather than it just being a parent, an aunty or someone you know who is able to offer you that experience.

Yolande Burgess: Slightly braver schools will go to parents and say, "We know that you work for a big employer. Can you help us to bag 20 work experience placements?" Most parents step up to the mark when they are asked.

Q224 **Chair:** Do you think that careers lead roles are sufficiently resourced?

Yolande Burgess: No.

Q225 **Chair:** What would you recommend to solve that?

Rachael Saunders: It is a really important role, and it is really important that it has been named and identified for the first time. Plenty of schools are being very clear that they have a new responsibility but no new resource to add behind it. Headteachers organisations are the best placed to talk about exactly what resource is needed, but clearly a role has been identified and there is no additional resource to make it happen.

Lauren Mistry: I think schools will tell you that the main resource to make that happen is money.

Q226 **Chair:** Where else in the Department's budget do you think that resource could come from?

Yolande Burgess: The Careers and Enterprise Company.

Q227 **Max Parry:** Sarah, can we be confident that the Careers and Enterprise Company will be able to deliver on its obligations to help schools improve their careers advice and guidance?

Sarah Horner: Our view is that there needs to be a partnership; the Careers Enterprise Company cannot do it on its own. It needs to work with other providers—careers advisers in schools and colleges, the National Careers Service, local authorities. That is already happening in some areas. For example, Liverpool have taken the lead in looking at a skills and careers strategy and asked the Careers and Enterprise Company to support them and lead on it.

We also published a report in March, which I can send to the Committee afterwards, called "Effective Practice in Employer Engagement for 16/17 Year Olds Studying Below Level 2". It states: "The findings of this research

suggest that effective employer engagement activities address the eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, which promote a tailored approach to careers education that embeds employer encounters and learning from labour market information. These principles should inform the development of the transition year model. This could provide a link with the 20 new Careers Hubs that the Careers and Enterprise Company is set to establish in order to support schools and colleges to deliver against the Gatsby Benchmarks.”

Chair: I am interested to hear the rest of the panel’s views on this.

Rachael Saunders: I think that the Careers and Enterprise Company is, as my colleague described, committed to working in partnership wherever it can. That is the only way that this will work. It is well resourced to do its part of the jigsaw. It is about ensuring that every part of the ecosystem comes together and collaborates to make it happen.

Lauren Mistry: I agree. It is a big job, and there is still a lot to do. Our organisation has offered the support that we can to help them deliver on it. We are waiting to see how and when we can do that, and the results of it, too.

Q228 **Chair:** What support did you offer?

Lauren Mistry: We offered support with the network of schools that we work with. We work with networks of employers and young people, too. We work with a network of 20,000 young people and we offer a skills resource that gives young people employability skills that they need. We have offered our free resources and expertise to the Careers and Enterprise Company as well.

Daria Eckert: This is to all of you. We know that there are quite a lot of resources and toolkits that aim to help employers offer quality work experiences and placements, which some of your organisations organise. Do you think it is clear to employers where to look for support, and how could that be made easier?

Yolande Burgess: I don’t think it’s clear. We promote a strategy in London called London Ambitions. We basically stopped counting after we found 260 resources. It is a bit self-defeating. To help employers know what to do or how to arrange work experience, that probably needs to be more centrally managed and a bit more co-ordinated.

Simply putting more resources in place does not necessarily help. We probably need to look at what is already out there. The research has arguably been done in this area, and we know what works, so let’s find it and show it to people, rather than create something new.

Sarah Horner: As I mentioned earlier, we are doing a specific piece of work on this. We are reviewing everything that is out there and will make some suggestions around toolkits. As was said, a ridiculous amount of



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information is out there. We recently did a collection of essays about apprenticeships, which apprentices contributed to. One point that was made was about teaching employers how to recruit young people and how to employ young people.

Employers are generally keen to employ young people, but sometimes they are a bit nervous or are not quite sure how to go about it or, if they employ a young person, how to manage them. With the apprenticeship scheme, that is happening more and more, so another part of it will be about almost training employers to work with young people.

I think the Government is listening. For example, the National Careers Service website is particularly bad. I have worked in digital for a long time. Sometimes you look at these resources and you think, "What? How did you create that?" But they are revamping it based on feedback, so a lot of these resources are being looked at. I feel that an active discussion is going on.

Lauren Mistry: I echo that. It is a confusing landscape. Having a set of standards that employers should meet on work experience would help that. Choice is a great and really valuable thing to have, but there will need to be specialist support and sector specialists providing that information. If you have standards that every employer is set to meet, they can make decisions for themselves on how they meet them, or choose the best guides and information for them.

Rachael Saunders: As people have said, there is so much advice and guidance out there that more is not needed. This is probably one of those areas where a carrot is more useful than a stick. Raising the profile of and celebrating companies that are doing this really well, and getting the detail out there of really good examples that others can emulate, will be at least as powerful as anything else. The guidance and advice is there, but lifting up great examples and encouraging others is really important. I briefly mentioned the work experience framework earlier, so I will not repeat that. We also have the Future Proof framework, which is about helping companies to think about how to take bias out of their recruitment processes so that they suit young people. It is there for companies to use, and it is a question of celebrating those that are doing it well and encouraging others.

Q229 **Chair:** Do you think all the existing information should be collated in a central place, such as an online hub?

Rachael Saunders: I may be too much of a cynic. On the one hand, yes, great. If that could ever be achieved, it would be extraordinary, because then everybody would be able to find it, but it is difficult to keep those hubs up to date and reliable. They are really resource intensive and are out of date almost as soon as you have finished updating it, because something has changed or someone has moved on. If it was possible to find some way of tagging something to bring things together, that would be amazing, but it is really hard and resource intensive to do it well.



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Lauren Mistry: We were talking about SMEs and small businesses earlier. Some of those organisations are going to need some real, practical help and support. Having it online is great as a reference point, but actually having real people there—we have talked about careers hubs—is really important for being able to explore it. I don't think an online hub is a bad idea, but I don't know the full extent of how it will help.

Sarah Horner: More needs to be done on a local level as well. When we have talked to Government about a skills strategy, one of the things that Esther McVey, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, said recently was that they want to set a national framework but see it delivered at a local level, doing more with devolved authorities. For example, the West Midlands combined authority is doing much more on its skills strategy at the local level and trying to have more autonomy over that so that it can respond to local needs and work with local employers and connect up what is happening with education and with jobs, so there are more links. At the Learning and Work Institute we have just launched a Youth Commission, which will run for a year, and we will look at links between employment and training, and specific issues around young people and some recommendations on what we might be able to do to improve that. There was something else I was going to say about that, but it has gone. Move on.

Yolande Burgess: I am probably slightly more cynical than Rachael when it comes to an online hub.

Sarah Horner: I'm sorry, but I have just remembered the point I was going to make: it was about the digital divide. Sometimes an assumption is made that young people all have smartphones, but they do not. You probably all do, as young people, but there are lots of young people who do not have access sometimes. If you put everything online, that can be a barrier as well. That is one thing, but as Lauren was saying, it is not the only answer.

Q230 **Chair:** Just to be clear, we are talking about the importance of a hub for business, not for young people. We will come on to that in a bit.

Yolande Burgess: With employers, it is about trying to bring together structures that we have nationally available to us. For example, the National Careers Service deliver regionally through something called the Inspiration Agenda. In London, we are really lucky that the Inspiration Agenda works really well. They use the power of the National Careers Service, but then work directly with the boroughs in London. They use their regeneration teams, for example, to talk directly to employers and help them to understand what resources are available. That is bringing the power of a national structure together with what local people understand on the ground and teams of people who know how to talk to employers, understand their area and can bring young people together with employers.

Q231 **Sanah Kashyap:** This question is directed to all of you. Do you believe that businesses offering work experience should be required to



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demonstrate that their placements meet a certain quality standard? If so, how would you see that working in practice? If not, what are the problems with that approach? Shall we start with Rachael?

Rachael Saunders: Obviously, there are some aspects of work experience placements, like safeguarding and personal safety knowledge, that need to be standardised. I think another benchmark that businesses should be asked to meet is about social mobility and fair access to work experience placements. For example, at KPMG, if somebody is asked, through a personal contact, to give a young person work experience, the business asks that individual to make sure that they are also offering that opportunity to somebody else through KPMG's existing schools networks and so on. It's difficult to stop family networks, networks of friends and so on asking for those opportunities, but making sure that the door is being opened wider and other young people are also being offered those opportunities is really important.

It is important to acknowledge, though, that, overwhelmingly, businesses are doing this voluntarily, unfunded, because it is the right thing to do, so while there has to be a baseline of basic standards of safety and so on that you need to meet to have young people in your workplace, it would be difficult to stop work experience placements because they did not meet a particular higher bar. I don't want to repeat myself, but as I said before, I think it is best to celebrate best practice and encourage others to move towards it, rather than try to regulate.

Lauren Mistry: I believe there should be a standard, a framework, that employers have to meet. I think that we can set that up so that it's engaging to small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs, who are then able to engage with young people. We have created a framework that does just that. Young people and employers have worked together to come up with a minimum set of standards that they would require and expect of an employer, with guides and tools on how to reach them.

Sarah Horner: There are already some standards out there, such as Fair Train's work experience quality standard. That is quite a useful guide for employers if they want to learn how to set one up. We don't agree that there should have to be a specific standard, because it might put off small businesses in particular. Some small businesses, if they are sole traders, might not necessarily be that digitally savvy, either, and might not be online. But we think there should be some guidelines on what good work experience is. That is a key feature of pre-apprenticeship programmes as well.

I would also echo the other points about how it's really important to have different types of encounters with employers. It doesn't necessarily have to be the full work experience thing. It may be spending a day with an employer or, as Yolande was saying, getting employers to come in and talk to young people. Not all of them may be ready to jump right into work experience, both on the employer side and on the young person side.



Yolande Burgess: Following the introduction of the statutory requirement for work-related learning in 2004, the then Department published a quality standard for work experience, but most of the quality standard actually rested with schools. It was much more about planning, reviewing and making sure you were setting up work experience placements right.

I agree with Rachael's point that employers do this voluntarily, so imposing a quality standard would be highly risky and probably counterproductive, but when you support a school to plan their work experience well, they are more likely to say, "Can you help me do this better?", and then you can point them in the direction of something like the Fair Train quality standard. Often, we see that working really well. But we're now back to the issue of resources for schools to help them to do that.

Q232 **Jason Stewart:** My question is to everyone. To what extent would a Government-backed work experience online hub help to improve the quality and range of work experience that young people are able to access?

Lauren Mistry: In relation to an online hub for young people, it's difficult to measure the quality until you see something like that, in terms of improving quality. It would certainly improve access for those young people who are digitally savvy and can get access to it. One of the things young people tell us is that it's really difficult to know where to look and how to look. You almost have to find things by going through hoops on an employer's website. So having a place that young people could go to would be great. I would err against creating something new. There are great programmes, such as Movement to Work, that already have the technology in place to do it. I am not sure how you ensure quality in that process, but certainly access could be improved.

Rachael Saunders: Online solutions are best when they back up in-person, real-life relationships and networks. Sarah mentioned the West Midlands combined authority and the work they are looking to do to bring together work experience placements across their region. The reason that they are able to have that huge aspiration is that they have put the work in to build those relationships in person and through existing networks. When you already have good working relationships, people are more likely to put the effort in to support an online solution. I suggest that an online solution that either covered existing organisations and networks or was locally sustained is more likely to be valued, kept up to date and useful than a single national hub that has very little ownership.

Yolande Burgess: I think geography matters here as well. I know there are some good online hubs in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Apologies for being London-centric, but that is my job. Some 8.8 million people live in London—it is a bit big. We need to think about how to combine what is available to us structurally and nationally, and make that work locally. We have an online hub in London called the London Ambitions portal, but we are not unaware of the fact that that needs to be supplemented quite



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closely with local activity as well, because geography matters, and when you are big you have to be aware of locality.

Q233 **Jason Stewart:** Do you guys all agree that having interpersonal relationships is the most effective way of using your online hub?

Yolande Burgess: If you have an online hub, you have to back it up with face to face.

Sarah Horner: There are two things I would add to that. From a technical point of view, I know a previous person suggested an app. I have worked in digital and often people's solution to any problem is to say, "Let's create an app." That is not the answer to the problem. If you have an online hub, you would need to make it mobile friendly. Not everyone has a phone, but when they do it is much more egalitarian to have a mobile website, rather than an app, because then people have to download an app and might have to pay for access if they have Google Play or whatever. So we need to think through the technical journey as well.

In my previous role, I worked at London Youth. That was very London-centric as well, but we were working with young people and the bit that always gets missed out in any engagement with young people is around youth services. There are a lot of youth services out there working on employability with young people. Sometimes the people you are trying to reach are maybe not engaging with school or their families, but they are engaging with trusted adults elsewhere. When we are thinking about resources, we need to think about people working with young people and not just schools. There are other avenues where you can reach some of the hardest-to-reach young people who need the most help.

Q234 **Mun Wu:** My question is aimed towards Rachael. Self-employed people are making up a large and growing part of the workforce. Is enough being done to help young would-be entrepreneurs to get a taste of what self-employment involves?

Rachael Saunders: This is a really interesting one, because, almost by definition, self-employment varies enormously according to who you are, what you are doing, what your business is and what sector you are in. A wide-range of organisations are running enterprise activities in schools, which is probably one aspect of a kind of taster of the sorts of decisions you might want to be making as you set up your own business. A couple of years ago, we worked closely in London—apologies for a very London-centric example—with the GLA and an organisation called Workspace. Workspace is a workspace organisation and has different companies on their site. We worked collectively across all of those businesses to create work experience for young people, so that between them a whole significant group of smaller businesses could work together to offer work experience opportunities for young people. That had some success and some value. The will is there but, as with all of this, there is always more to be done.

Q235 **Mun Wu:** Can I just open that question to the rest of the panel?



Yolande Burgess: I am scared of being very London-centric. Social enterprise, entrepreneurship and self-employment are beautifully rife in London and that needs to be supported. Certainly, when we are thinking more broadly about experiences of the world of work, encouraging young people to think about how they can be employers themselves, even from a really young age, is a creative way of helping young people to think about the world of work. So rather than thinking that it's an add-on, I think it needs to be really heavily embedded in any conversations about experiences of the world of work. That is why getting very small, micro-employers involved in experience of the world of work becomes hugely important. Not everybody will start to run their own business, but just thinking about it, I think, helps young people think more creatively about the world of work.

Lauren Mistry: I would agree. I do not think enough is being done to support young would-be entrepreneurs, and I think it needs to start in schools as well. For years we have sent young people off to see colleges or sent them off to see universities. Now we are requiring that they get experience of apprenticeships, too, and I think that entrepreneurship and self-employment should be a huge part of that curriculum in the same way that we are making apprenticeships be part of that curriculum too.

Q236 **Jack Payne:** I am going to shift the focus to the Government's industrial strategy. This one is aimed at Yolande and Lauren. Is work experience sufficiently integrated in the Government's industrial strategy?

Yolande Burgess: In my reading of the industrial strategy, I would have to say no. It is heavily focused on work placement. Again, I appreciate that may be my reading of the industrial strategy but, particularly when we are talking about young people, it cannot just be about the classic notion of two weeks' work experience or a work placement. It has to be much broader than that, and more rounded. Certainly, because there is a sectoral focus within the industrial strategy, there is more to do around things like engineering, for example. How do we encourage more young girls and women to think about engineering? How could we do that in a way that is creative, interesting and could start in primary school? I think the industrial strategy has not embedded it sufficiently well.

Lauren Mistry: I would agree. It is there and it is recognised—work placements. We have sat on many panels looking at the detail of it and how it is going to happen—the hows still leave a lot to be desired. So it is there but—

Q237 **Jack Payne:** Okay. I will go to Yolande. Should the Government's approach to work experience also consider the part-time work opportunities available for young people, like Saturday jobs?

Yolande Burgess: Absolutely. Work is not just nine to five. Okay, when I was growing up it possibly was nine to five, but it is not now. Part-time, flexi-working, evening working—work just looks and feels very different, so the notion that we sell a particular way of working is probably now very unhelpful. Part-time working is also really useful in terms of the way



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people live their lives. Lauren possibly mentioned earlier the fact that part-time jobs for young people have diminished exponentially over the last 15 to 20 years, to the point where very few young people have part-time jobs. I don't know if we could ever row back and get ourselves to a space where lots of young people do have part-time jobs, but we are possibly missing a trick in terms of how we explain work. It looks and feels very different now, and we need to be explaining all the differences in the workplace.

Q238 Jack Payne: But do you think the Government should promote part-time job opportunities as an experience of work? Do you think that would be effective?

Yolande Burgess: Yes, I do.

Q239 Jack Payne: Okay. Sarah, you talked a bit about the urban-rural divide. What steps should Government take to ensure more consistent geographical and sector provision?

Sarah Horner: We have actually done some research on this. One of our recommendations is a recognition by Government that a lot of providers in rural areas will be SMEs and that they will need additional support and guidance. One of the ways we think they could be identified is through the Careers and Enterprise Company's cold spots analysis of careers education. The other two things I would add to that is to think about help with travel costs as well. If you are in a rural area, that could be really prohibitive. That is a point we have made about apprenticeships as well. I think it is also about realising what a good job is. We had an employment skills convention this week and the point was made by a contributor from Oldham that what is considered a good job in Oldham might not be considered a great job in London. So it is relative. It has also—I think we have come back to this a lot—been very place-based and local, and really looking at what is happening in the local environment is going to be the best way.

Q240 George Pearce: My question is to the whole panel. What single step should the Government take to improve the quality and value of work experience for young people and businesses?

Rachael Saunders: Building on the previous question, my answer would be that a significant public investment has been made, initially in opportunity areas and now in the new careers hubs that have been announced. I think there is a really powerful opportunity to gather an evidence base for what works, because a lot of public money has been spent. I know that the Careers and Enterprise Company has really committed to understand the impact of that, so there is a really powerful opportunity over the next year, two years or three years to gather a really important evidence base about what works and then, I hope, to fund that properly in the next spending review, across the whole country, not just in particular selected areas.

Lauren Mistry: We went a little bit simpler with ours. We would love to see the Government setting a precedent and ensuring that there is a clear



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policy and standard for work experience within their own Departments and environment, across the civil service. We would love to see them step up and implement that programme for themselves.

Sarah Horner: I have a couple of points. The main one is that young people are all different and the one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. Individual circumstances need to be taken into account. We would really like to see specific help for young carers and care leavers and children in care. There are two final points. Sometimes, pay for young people is premised on the young person still living at home, but if you are a care leaver, from the age of 18 you are looking after yourself. The other point is that young adult carers have a lot of transferable skills—they are sometimes managing a household—but that isn't often recognised by employers or teachers. It is also about recognition of what they are actually doing.

Yolande Burgess: In terms of one step, I don't think there is a silver bullet. If I were to try and wrap it up, I would say start young. If the responsibility and accountability for this rests with schools, then schools need to be resourced to do it. That is where I would probably start: start young and start in schools.

Q241 **Chair:** Thank you. I'd like to say how grateful we are for your evidence. We are just going to tie up a few loose ends and see if we can get some more concrete recommendations.

This point was already mentioned, but would the rest of the panel recommend that careers learning starts in primary school?

Rachael Saunders: Yes, and that should be engagement with employers but also thinking about the employability skills that you can learn throughout your career as well—direct engagement with employers, work experience and essential skills.

Lauren Mistry: I don't think any of us will disagree on this. There are some really crazy ways you can do that, in terms of having employers come in, but also in terms of relating to the outside world what young people are learning and bringing employers into that too. That is really important.

Sarah Horner: I think if it's done in a way where it is not just, "We are training you to be a person who is just going to work and that is your only goal in life." It is about finding a balance of that creative approach and doing something that is fun, but also with that exposure.

Yolande Burgess: Yes, I agree with all that.

Q242 **Caitlin O'Regan:** One final question from me. We know that parents play a big role in the opportunities and guidance that young people get. How can we better educate parents? Whose responsibility is it?

Yolande Burgess: That is a tricky one. I think it is quite difficult to do. I have been watching some of the creative things that some of the schools in London are doing. For example, when they have work fairs, they



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deliberately aim them at parents as well. They have even done things like changing the time of them so they are in the evenings after parents have finished work, so that parents can come in and get the feel for and a view of what the local job market looks like. Let's face it: parents are a generation away from the labour market that their children are looking in, so they need some help to understand the labour market. Is it any single organisation's responsibility? I would probably hesitate to say that it was, but we do know that schools have access to parents and we are seeing some really creative ways that schools are trying to do that.

Q243 Caitlin O'Regan: We have mentioned work experience hubs a lot. Looking more at the Government's page, do you think that it would be helpful for parents if it guided them to organisations that can help in their area and offered correct information for careers, or would that be a bit of a burden?

Lauren Mistry: I think that some parents would use it and find it useful. To echo what Yolande was saying, I don't think a lot of parents realise what they don't know; you don't realise that you can be spreading myths and things about certain sectors, and things that you believe a certain sector is like, without really realising it and without intentionally doing that. I don't think it is a bad idea to put information online, but it will need more than that to be effective for all parents.

Rachael Saunders: Labour market information is a key Gatsby benchmark, so it is a part of careers provision for young people. It is really important for parents as well, because often you know what you know and having that objective data about the jobs that are available in your area and the sectors that are strong and growing in your area really helps families to talk about what options there actually are. Sometimes we can restrict that.

It may be that school presents labour market information for their local authority area but actually the young person is willing to travel, so making sure that the widest possible labour market data is available to parents and children is really important.

We have sometimes had employers come along to parents evenings, so that there are some people there for parents to chat to. The fact that you are a volunteer from a business doesn't mean that you are an expert in every business and every job, but at least it means that there is somebody there for parents to have a conversation with, if they would like to have that kind of reflective opportunity.

Sarah Horner: It is a complicated question, but an important one. A lot of research on NEETS shows that often the environment that a young person is in determines whether or not they become NEET, and those experiences can change. They might be NEET for one reason, and then something changes and they are NEET for another reason. It is complicated, because obviously everyone is different and each parent is going to be different.



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Definitely more work needs to be done on improving parents' and guardians' confidence in apprenticeships. There is also a massive generation gap, as you say. Sometimes tension arises between young people and their parents because parents think the world of work is the same as when they were starting work, and it is so different, so I think there should be some education on that.

I would also echo the point again about youth services and looking at resources outside of schools and other trusted adults who work with young people, who may either have been discouraged by their parents or don't want to talk to them about it.

Q244 Chair: How important do you think that work experience is in getting young people into apprenticeships and decreasing stigma among parents, for example?

Sarah Horner: It is massively important. It is about looking at all the different steps. A young person may even benefit from having some experience with a training provider, before they have even spent a day with an employer. It is really about looking at the individual concerns.

Both Lauren and I have been involved with the Talent Match programme, which works with young people and NEETs. That is a really individual approach, where you really work with the young person and work out what is best for them, and you talk to them about what they want to do. Then you can work with them to improve things. It may be their basic skills that need some work. They may need some help with their confidence, or there might be some mental health issues. Everyone is different, so it is about looking at that individual, tailored approach that is going to be best.

Rachael Saunders: I have heard a number of times anecdotally that one of the barriers to apprenticeships is families and parents, and the idea that a university degree is what everyone should be aspiring to. I think the opportunity for young people to have access to work experience, where they can see apprenticeship role models, but potentially those role models also being showcased to families and community more generally could be really powerful. There are people who have gone through apprenticeships and achieved a huge amount, and I think there is real value in both young people and their families seeing that.

Q245 Chair: Thank you. We have talked about the changing world of work. Should there be an option of online work experience for people who can't access businesses as easily as others, such as carers, as you mentioned, and should schools support individuals in that?

Rachael Saunders: There are some virtual platforms that allow you to look at different job roles and the different requirements—kind of a day in the life of different jobs. If for any person work experience is absolutely impossible, then that is obviously much better than nothing.

One of the things I was going to say about the more remote rural and coastal areas is that in a lot of those communities the public sector is one



of the major employers. One very tangible thing that Government could do is offer flexible placements that might enable carers, for example, to access experience of the world of work, even if it is in the public sector.

Yolande Burgess: I think we could be more creative with an online or virtual platform, because actually a lot of the businesses operate online, so you can have a proper work experience online. Let us look at the industries and businesses that operate in that manner, to look at how we can set up some really good, structured work placements that can happen from home. Businesses operate from homes too.

Lauren Mistry: I agree, but I would still suggest that it is one option among others. It is a great idea, and there are examples of it working. You can take online work experience, if you haven't managed to secure it, in school. You will be in a safe environment in school and you will be able to follow that week's work experience in the same way as your peers. But it is still important that we do our best to ensure that work experiences are accessible, particularly to disabled young people, who need those experiences of work too. Rather than suggesting online, I think it is more valuable to look at things such as travel subsidies to get people in, if that is a possibility.

Sarah Horner: Absolutely. Otherwise you can entrench isolation, and you need to guard against that. I just want to add one final thing about apprenticeships. In our essay collection we had a contribution from a young man who is absolutely brilliant. His was the best written essay out of all the ones we were given, and there were some very senior people. He made the point that he did not really settle at school, and I can believe that. He was a brilliant writer and he came and presented our launch at the House of Commons, and was very articulate. He said he struggled at school, but he did a work placement; he didn't even know about apprenticeships. He decided that that was what he wanted to do and he had to persuade his family, but it was actually the making of him. He found that it worked for him. Being in the working world and doing an apprenticeship was where he flourished, rather than being in school. His parents eventually saw the benefits of it and he has ended up with a full-time job. Looking at the success stories of young people who have gone through the apprenticeship programme and working more with them would help.

Q246 **Dominic Jones:** Is there a difference in the way the public and private sectors should be encouraged or incentivised to offer work experience?

Yolande Burgess: No. They are all businesses; let's treat them as businesses.

Rachael Saunders: There is a particular need now with T-levels and the aspirations around the expansion of apprenticeships. There are Government frameworks and qualifications and so on that are going to absolutely need business engagement for them to be successful. To achieve the volume that is needed for those qualifications to be successful needs thinking about. Some consideration of incentives might be needed. I



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don't have an answer or a solution, but I think we will need a significant volume very quickly, probably in very specific areas of the economy. Some kind of incentive probably needs to be created to reach that level of provision at speed.

More generally, this is not just the right thing to do for a business. It is important to the business to bring forward a pipeline and get young people into its sector and its business into the future. Whether you are government or private sector, every business should be doing this. It is the right thing to do and it is good for the organisation.

Lauren Mistry: I am not against incentives, but I would treat the public and private sectors the same. If you want parity in terms of opportunity and you want quality to come through, they have to be treated the same.

Q247 **Dominic Jones:** Is that despite the pressure on public sector resources due to austerity, or do you think that approach would still work?

Yolande Burgess: I think that is particularly because of the strain on the public sector, which has borne the absolute lion's share of austerity since 2010. Invariably what happens is that it is not an incentive; it then becomes an imposed requirement on the public sector. Let's not have that.

Sarah Horner: I think it is also about being creative with the apprenticeship levy. Changes are already being made to make it more flexible and for employers to be able to pass it to other businesses in their supply chain. The Federation of Small Businesses is also looking for more flexibility on how the levy is used, so that could be another way.

Q248 **Chair:** You have mentioned work experience being the right thing to do for businesses, but do you think that businesses are sufficiently aware of the actual benefits? If not, how could they be made aware?

Lauren Mistry: I know that they are aware. Studies show that 85% of graduate employers want young people who have done work placements with them, but only 29% offered them. A lot of recruitment schemes with large organisations are filled with people who have already had experience in that organisation before, so employers do know the importance. I think they struggle with how they can do it and the part they play in this role.

Rachael Saunders: We are a membership organisation of about 800 businesses, mostly bigger corporates. We know that more than 90% of our members are involved in schools. Research shows that 78% of all the businesses that work with schools offer work experience placements, so this is something that businesses are doing; it is not the case that businesses don't understand its importance and value, because many of them are doing it well and taking it incredibly seriously.

The challenge is volume and scale. There are very approximately 40 million people in the world of work and 4 million young people in secondary school—I am very much rounding up and down. That is approximately a 1:10 ratio. There is demand on time, energy and resource



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so that that volume of young people can access the world of work each year. It should not be a surprise to us that this is not perfect, because it is a voluntary system that everyone is doing their best to make work well. There may be the odd curmudgeon in the corner who says, “No, I don’t think this matters,” but overwhelmingly there is huge consensus that it matters and that it will be done to scale and at the right quality.

Yolande Burgess: I am thinking back to the survey we had done last year and the feedback we tended to get from SMEs, in particular. They probably were not aware of the benefits of offering work experience. When SMEs gave positive feedback that had offered work experience, some of the benefits they were coming back with were slightly more unusual, such as, “We did not realise how having a young person in our work force would bring much more different, creative thinking,” or, “We were not using technology as well as we could have—they have introduced that into the workspace.” How we sell the benefits of work experience becomes quite important, particularly when we desperately need to bring more SMEs onboard. We probably need to look at those slightly less hard-edged outcomes that we often talk about with work experience.

Q249 **Mun Wu:** Following on from that, how do you think they could be made aware of the benefits, to encourage more SMEs to get involved?

Rachael Saunders: I think they will be most interested when they have a recruitment challenge. Where there is an SME that finds it easy to recruit, it is more challenging to make the case, but overwhelmingly businesses that want to grow want to be able to recruit. Businesses want to have a great reputation, and one aspect of that reputation is young people who are their potential future employees as well as their potential future customers.

The general benefits of engaging with schools, including through work experience, are: reputation in your local community, which matters to almost every organisation; the ability to make links with customers, either directly through young people who are present or future customers, or more generally through the networks you create; and—this is usually the most powerful benefit—the people who work for your business really enjoy working with schools and young people. The employee satisfaction and motivation that comes from the opportunity to pass on knowledge, skills and experience, to contribute to a young person’s future, is really powerful.

Often the early conversations are about recruitment and reputation—those are quite hard-edged, commercial conversations you can have—but once a business gets into this and really embeds and moves forward, it is the employee engagement that you get from really powerfully engaging with young people that keeps businesses committed.

Sarah Horner: Some of it is about red tape as well. Sometimes there is a bit of a fear with the apprenticeship levy and the apprenticeship programme that there is too much bureaucracy. Sometimes employers



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think it will be too much bureaucracy to employ a young person. There is an education piece around what exactly is involved.

Q250 **Chair:** To change the topic a little, if there were to be a benchmark, do you think that equality in provision should be a measure in how good the work experience is?

Rachael Saunders: Yes, and I am really glad you said “benchmark” rather than “kite mark” or “standard”, because a benchmark is about being measured against your peers, so you have a sense of where you are in relation to others. It is about continuing, moving forward and improving. We have a tracker tool, which asks businesses a number of questions. The important thing is that you can never reach the top; you should always be moving forward and improving. If you were to make any kind of recommendation about something like this, I would urge a benchmark that enables that progression and to have a sense of where you are alongside your peers, not a static kite mark or standard that you fill in once and tick that you have done it, which goes in a drawer.

Q251 **Chair:** What are the views of the rest of the panel on that?

Sarah Horner: For apprenticeships, more needs to be done to improve quality and widen access and participation. The Government have gone for the big numbers, but a lot of our feedback suggests that it would be better to have fewer but higher quality apprenticeships, and ones that reach wider groups of people. It is still predominantly the same groups of people accessing them, so we want some more work on that, and definitely some standards and frameworks on apprenticeships as well, because that would help build confidence for young people, employers and parents and guardians.

Q252 **Chair:** Do you think the same could apply to work experience, not just apprenticeships?

Sarah Horner: I think it links in. I don't think that, as we were saying, it necessarily has to be prescriptive. The main point that we would make—we will look at this on the Youth Commission—is that it is about joining all these things up, rather than looking at things in isolation. It is about looking at education, training and employment, and bringing it all together, rather than saying, “Oh, we'll do this thing over here to improve this in isolation.” It is about thinking about it in the round. If you are improving the quality of apprenticeships, there will be an improvement in work placements, because employers will start to think more about how they are engaging with young people.

Yolande Burgess: Rachael's point is important in the sense that a benchmark is actually about helping peers to look at how they are operating within a particular sector. Schools want to do the best, so they look to other schools for good practice; they are not little islands. When we are talking about quality and equality, particularly with work experience, it is about having some sensible benchmarks that are set by the sector, not by somebody else. If we are going to do this, let the sector do it. Talk to schools, talk to the Association of School and College



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Leaders, and talk to the Association of Colleges. Let them do it, because they are good at it.

Q253 **Chair:** Do you think there should be a benchmark for schools and for businesses?

Rachael Saunders: I think that schools are well placed to set expectations of businesses. A school looking for placements for its young people can say to those businesses, "These are the component parts that we expect to see within that placement." If there are personal networks being mobilised to make those placements happen, the ask to the business can be very clear. You are not just writing an email asking for a week's work experience; you are writing an email that contains some clear content about what is hoped for and expected. It would be great to co-create that with business, but I think schools are well placed to set those expectations.

Q254 **Chair:** Do you have anything to add on that, Lauren?

Lauren Mistry: I am not sure that I would agree; it would probably need more thinking about in my brain for that to happen. Schools are being measured against a lot—they have a lot being imposed on them right now, and a lot of things that they need to achieve and do. It would be helpful for employers to hold the benchmark, the kite mark—or whatever we call it—so that young people can take some ownership of that too, and know what to look out for. If the school is always using it, we are only really looking at work experience for 14-year-olds. We are not really going any further than that, and a young person taking it into their own hands can't be empowered in any way to select an employer they would like to work for.

Chair: Does anyone have any final comments that they would like to add? Again, I would like to thank you for your evidence, which has been really useful.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE, Director, DHM & Associates Ltd.

Q255 **Chair:** Welcome to the Youth Select Committee. If there is any noise outside, we will try to carry on as best we can. Could you introduce yourself for the record?

Dr Hughes: Good morning. It is lovely to meet you all and thank you for inviting me. My name is Deidre Hughes and I am the director of DMH Associates. I wear a number of different hats. I am an associate fellow at the Institute for Employment Research—the secret is in the title. I am also chair of Skills Northern Ireland, which brings young people together to expose them to more experiences of the world of work.

Q256 **Chair:** Thank you. How does part-time work for young people compare with what we think of as work experience, such as a placement?

Dr Hughes: A very good question. It is helpful to differentiate between what is meant by part-time work and by work experience. Work experience is usually a time-limited placement undertaken by a young person while still in further education, though not exclusively. It is really a placement in a workplace that is designed to give young people insights into the world of work and the experience of being employed.

If you juxtapose that, part-time work is usually a form of work in the workplace where there is some form of reimbursement, which is often but not always financial.

Q257 **Chair:** What does the international evidence tell us about teenagers' experiences in part-time work?

Dr Hughes: I have spent a number of years as a researcher looking at young people's transitions, not just in this country but in other parts of the world. In 2016, I led a research project that looked at what is out there in terms of the most robust studies. Those are studies where there is a control group—where some people get some experience and others do not.

The international evidence tells us that the teenage experience of work is connected with improved economic outcomes in the long term. We looked at those very robust international studies and they identified those positive economic outcomes for adults who had worked part time as teenagers.

One of the big issues, which may have been presented already, is that although there are real economic-outcome benefits, there are sometimes concerns that it might have a negative impact on immediate attainment. There is that tension between putting all your eggs in one basket, studying really hard and getting the results, versus the trade-off for work experience.

I will just give a couple of headlines. The impact is fairly modest when the hours worked are low, which is usually up to about five hours per week. If it exceeds 15 hours per week, it is more detrimental when it comes to attainment.

The most worrying trend that the literature tells us about is that, in 1997, 42% of young people aged between 16 and 17 combined full-time education with part-time work. In 2014, the number was 18%, so there has been a big drop. That is why I welcome your interest in this subject and the chance to give you evidence, because it is a really big issue for young people.

Q258 **Jason Stewart:** What are the main challenges in England's career landscape for young people seeking work experience, and how does it compare with other parts of the UK?

Dr Hughes: There are a number of big challenges for England. It is helpful to look at what is going on in other countries as well. England's careers support landscape for young people is best characterised as piecemeal and very fragmented.



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For example, young people in England have access to a National Careers Service, but only by telephone or webchat—the website is being revamped as we speak. However, no one really knows how many young people use that telephone helpline and the sorts of issues that are presenting. Are young people saying, “I am really struggling to get a part-time job, can you help me?” We don’t really know the answer to that.

Direct support for young people—when it comes to their exposure to, or their experiences of, the world of work in England—has been left to schools and colleges. However, there is limited ring-fenced funding for schools to do that, and in some cases there is none. We have a tension in England, which is that, on the one hand, many young people are not getting exposure to and experience of the world of work, and on the other hand the burden of responsibility is placed on schools, colleges and employers to give them that.

It is best to think of England as having a market when it comes to thinking about careers support for young people. That is probably why you have seen a whole range of people from different organisations. In England, there has been marketisation. It is a market approach—let as many people come in and, hopefully, the market will allow more and more people to gain opportunities.

Many other countries such as Scotland, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland or Finland have a national careers service that is wrapped around education and labour markets. One big tension in England is whether a national system needs to be put in place that young people can smoothly navigate through, including in accessing opportunities.

I am involved in a review of careers provision in Ireland at the moment. One big issue in England is that, in other countries that have a national system—such as Northern Ireland, where careers advisers are employed by the civil service—they have access to big datasets on things like apprenticeships, traineeships and job vacancies. Those national systems actually have access to the sort of intelligence that young people and their families need. If you leave it to the market, you leave it to a whole range of different players.

I am a positive, optimistic person, and I have always believed in creating the best possible opportunities for young people. England has what are called Gatsby benchmarks, which are brilliant. Sir John Holman has given evidence to you on them. They are principles and things that schools are required to do more and more of.

However, the reality is that schools and colleges face shrinking budgets. If we have a decline in young people’s opportunities to access part-time work in England, we have to find a better way of actually empowering young people to be able to use the best information available.

If you want me to say which model I would point you towards, it would be Scotland’s. For example, I looked on their website last night. On the front page of their website is a message to parents saying, “Look, these are



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some of the myths around having a part-time job while you are studying.” They are very proactive in trying to educate parents that it is not a bad thing to have a job. They also have a certificate where young people can get acknowledgment and credit for up to 120 hours of experience of work, which London Ambitions embraced and has been promoting throughout England.

Q259 **Chair:** Does the 120-hours recognition include volunteering?

Dr Hughes: It does. It is very much anchored in the young person having been supported through either a careers service or the links they have with the people in their network. They own that accreditation, and they can build that up in lots of different ways.

Q260 **Chair:** Is there any robust evidence that Scotland is the best model?

Dr Hughes: There certainly is. I should put in a big caveat, colleagues. People always want to know where the best is and, “Can we just do the same as them?” but culturally services and areas are very different. I am always hesitant to say that they have it totally sorted in Scotland, because every system has got its challenges, but there is strong international research—in fact, I will be in Dublin next week to talk about the international evidence base—and it boils down to that very simple question of whether we need a national system where other services can feature and be wrapped around it or integrated where it is appropriate, or whether we stay with what I call the English experiment at the moment, which is to leave lots of things to chance and hope that young people will navigate their way smoothly through myriad different providers.

Q261 **Zara Janahi:** How can schools and colleges ensure that young people gain more exposure to and experience of the world of work?

Dr Hughes: I mentioned England, but I am conscious that you all come from different parts of the UK. The simple answer really is to think of two real live case studies. I spoke to two different organisations who work directly with schools in England. The first case is an example of really good practice: a local authority in the south-west region of England clustering schools and partnering up so that they can ensure that they are not all competing at the same time with the same employers, to get more experience of work for young people. A real concrete positive example is that at least 3,000 young people in year 10 and post-16 are getting work experience in this region.

But here is a big challenge which may have presented itself to you already. The introduction of the new T-levels may actually be too much of an ask for employers, who not only have to offer 50 days of work-related learning but also have the year 10 work experience. There is a concern that the pre-16 cohort of young people might suffer as a result of that, because it would be quite easy for schools to say, “Look, it’s too hard, and this is the priority.” That is something I am certainly keeping a watch on, because what we do not want is employers to switch off and say, “It’s too much hassle. There’s too much bureaucracy. There are too many players.”



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Generally, schools in England are struggling to offer work experience, but many of them—indeed, most of them—actually value it. It is important that you do not underestimate the impact of the cuts that are taking place.

I did say that I am a positive person. In the midst of some of the challenges, schools need to get some support—perhaps this is something the Department for Education could assist with—to address some of the myths circulating in schools and academies.

I said I was going to give you two examples. The other is an academy in the midlands that decided just this week not to offer work experience to year 10 students. The legal advisers in the academy based their decision on the new DFE guidance for helping keep children safe in education, which will come in in September. That school's interpretation needs to be challenged. The school has said that it is not going to send year 10s out on work experience because an employee with a full DBS check would have to be with the student at all times. We know in reality that that is not feasible in the workplace, and it contradicts the Gatsby benchmarks and the need for young people to have more support. Schools really need to be supported to deliver on the Gatsby benchmarks and work experience.

Schools in Northern Ireland and Scotland, and indeed in Wales, also have their challenges, but there is a big issue around schools not necessarily having easy access to labour market intelligence. In an ideal world—we are not too far away from having the technology—labour market information, such as vacancies, work experience opportunities and all that, should be able to be streamed easily into a school, so that when you are studying you have access to information about where the jobs are, which opportunities are growth areas and where there are particular shortages or jobs are changing.

For schools, the ask is significant at the moment. That is why I believe that we perhaps have to push back to Government to basically say, "Let's give schools more direct support." It may be that you take some of the funding and give it directly to schools so they can ensure that young people get exposure and experience of the world of work, rather than it being just left to chance or not there at all.

Q262 Chair: You mentioned the strain on schools within the Gatsby benchmarks. Is there anywhere internationally where the role of careers leader has been successful? How do schools get the resources or training they need to deliver that role effectively?

Dr Hughes: There are no immediate examples internationally of a careers leader in a school, but we know from international best practice that if someone in a school or college owns a topic and they are passionate about it, things will happen. The careers leader role is a really great idea, because it means that someone in the school is responsible for the careers support package. But the challenge is that if you do not provide resources and headteachers have to make a decision between a maths teacher and

someone who is going to organise work experience or careers support, you can probably guess who the winner in that is.

The careers leader role is great. In terms of the youth aspect of the careers strategy in England, there is a bit of what I would call smoke and mirrors, in that there is a great story there but if you are a young person and you have to navigate through the myriad and you do not have the social networks that others have, quite a lot of it is left to chance.

Q263 Max Parry: The London Ambitions strategy has proposed that every young person should have 100 hours of experience of the world of work by the time they are 16. Is that realistic—firstly, within London?

Dr Hughes: I think first it is important to distinguish between work experience and exposure to and experience of the world of work. One of the big things that bedevils us is that, a few years ago, work experience was seen to be a distraction in the national curriculum. The London Ambitions 100 hours of exposure to and experience of work is realistic; I can send you some slides to let you see how that 100 hours can be achieved, but one of the big messages is that we have to start young people's career learning early, in primary schools. We have to address some of the gender stereotypes. The way the 100 hours has been presented and embraced by many schools, local authorities and colleges in London is that it basically says, "What we're trying to achieve is to close that gap where young people are having these prolonged transitions in education and staying further away from the labour market."

For many young people going into the world of work—not for all, but for many—the first time might be when they are 21 or 22. The 100 hours is realistic; we know, for example, from lessons learned from Scotland that if you nurture young people and empower them to build up their exposure to and experience of the world of work from a very young age, the evidence shows it builds their confidence, increases their networks and gives them more social capital. We do not do enough of that. That was the thinking behind London Ambitions—I must say that Yolande Burgess, who led from London Councils in the partnership with the GLA and the LEP, was very attentive to ensuring that young people were more aware of their exposure to the world of work, and that is what we must aim towards. I am sure your work will put the spotlight on this: how can we ensure that we do not have a generation of young people who have not had direct experience in the world of work?

If you try to push it to a model where everybody has to have two weeks' work experience, we will be going backwards, because we know that in that model, if your mum and dad could get you into somewhere and it was a great placement, fantastic; but if you did not have a mum and a dad, or you did not have job opportunities in your area, it was more difficult. It is a vision, but a practical way of getting a conversation going around how we can avoid the drifting, where young people are left to sort it out for themselves. We have to find a way, particularly in England, to stop that leakage where many young people are just drifting because of the lack of support for them directly.



Q264 **Max Parry:** Is the proposal realistic outside London—for example, in rural areas, areas with a lower concentration of employers and less public transport?

Dr Hughes: Yes. Other areas have embraced it: for example, in the Black Country, the Black Country career development partnership was a group of people who came together from colleges, schools, the chamber of commerce and the local authority and, in the absence of funding, said, “We will take the London Ambitions and shape it for the young people in the Black Country.” I can send you a copy of their report.

This is tough work and it is not easy to achieve, but it is so important. In Somerset, they have formed a group of people coming together to look at how they can prevent a situation where schools say, “Young people in year 10, you can’t have any exposure or experience to the world of work, because it’s too tricky and the bureaucracy is too much.” The answer is yes; that was a bit long-winded, but yes, it is achievable.

Q265 **Max Parry:** You have spoken about the black country and how this could work. Could you briefly sum up how it could work?

Dr Hughes: Sure. I should also say that Cornwall is another area; they were the first to take London Ambitions and adapt it.

Again, it requires someone to hold the ring on this to make it happen, but let’s look at schools that identify with the ambition that all young people should have 100 hours’ experience of the world of work by the age of 16, which is what we have said. The illustration I will send you shows you that that can be done in lots of different ways. It can be through mentoring with an employer, through work shadowing, or through a part-time job. Young people are then encouraged to keep a record of that, which is acknowledged by that partnership in that area, and promote it to employers. It is not a quality kitemark, but it could be kitemarked. It is more a case of the young people being able to be confident in saying, “Look, I have worked hard at my studies, but as well as that, I have built up these experiences of, and exposure to, the world of work.” In essence, that is what has been happening in the other areas.

Q266 **Dominic Jones:** Based on what you have said so far, what steps need to be taken by Government to open up opportunities to work, volunteer, or experience work placements to a wider range of young people?

Dr Hughes: First, I should put a big caveat here and say that it is always easy to say, “Government should be doing more.” We need our young people to be demanding that employers step up and give them more experiences and exposure to the world of work. We have already discussed schools, but there are six steps that Government need to take directly.

The first is that Government need to address the myths that are circulating in schools and academies about the new statutory guidance and how that is going to close down opportunities. Secondly, they need to strengthen the National Careers Service support for young people—so, as

a minimum, publish who is using the telephone helpline and webchat services, and what issues young people are saying are of concern to them. I do not see any evidence of that; I could not find it in order to bring it to the Committee.

Thirdly, Government need to ensure that the National Careers Service website meets young people's needs. The website in England is being redesigned, and only yesterday, there was a consultation where the Education and Skills Funding Agency was asking for feedback. I would recommend that this Committee have a look at that website: is it fit for purpose? Does it relate to the issues that you have been investigating? I will send you the link to that. Government need to make sure that is working well.

Fourthly, Government need to hold the Careers & Enterprise Company to account in terms of the funding it has given the company, and see what its impact is on ensuring that more people are getting opportunities in the world of work. Some £40 million has been given to the Careers & Enterprise Company, which is quite a lot of money, and almost a further £40 million will go to them again—I am just hesitating over my maths—and £36 million will go to them again over the next two years. Government need to make sure that that is working. Personally, I would recommend to Government that Ofsted inspects the Careers & Enterprise Company in the same way that it inspects the National Careers Service, and then we will be able to see which of those systems are working best.

Fifthly, ideally, Government should directly fund schools and colleges to deliver on the Gatsby benchmarks and work experience. Finally, as well as being very attentive to young people who are in school and young people who drop out of school, Government need to focus more on the 18 to 25-year-olds who have come out of the system.

In England, because of this experiment that has gone on since 2012, we have a whole generation of young people who are not getting the exposure and experience that they should be. Those would be my six key things that I would recommend to you.

Q267 **Chair:** Thank you for your evidence, which has been really useful. We would like to follow up in writing later on, if that's okay with you.

Dr Hughes: Thank you very much. It was very interesting and great to meet you all.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Bhavina Bharkhada, Education and Skills Policy Adviser, EEF; Robert Burley, Director of Strategy, Public Affairs and Partnerships, vinspired; Ashley Hodges, Executive Director, Speakers for Schools; and Steve Radley, Policy Director, Construction Industry Training Board.

Q268 **Chair:** Welcome everyone. Thank you for taking the time to help us with our inquiry. Will the panel introduce themselves?



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Steve Radley: I am Steve Radley. I work for the Construction Industry Training Board. We are an organisation that raises a levy on employers in the industry to help them meet their skills needs.

Ashley Hodges: I am Ashley Hodges. I am the executive director of a charity called Speakers for Schools, and we help state schools access a link to esteemed people and organisations.

Robert Burley: I'm Rob Burley. I'm director of strategy and public affairs at vinspired. We are the UK's leading social action and volunteering charity for people aged 14 to 30. We provide and connect young people to volunteering opportunities.

Bhavina Bharkhada: Hi. I'm Bhavina Bharkhada, education and skills policy adviser at EEF. It is a manufacturers' organisation that represents some of your biggest manufacturers, such as Siemens and Jaguar Land Rover, but also family-run businesses, such as JJ Churchill and Warren Services.

Q269 **Chair:** Lovely. My first question is to anyone who wants to answer. What in your view is the purpose of work experience? What should young people hope to get out of it?

Bhavina Bharkhada: I'd be happy to start. There are two ways to look at it. For employers, it is about the opportunity to inspire young people into a career in manufacturing and engineering. We know at the moment that we have a skills shortage—it is something that we refer to in our submission—and 72% of manufacturers are concerned about accessing the skills they need. Inspiring the next generation of creators, innovators and makers is really important. One way to do that is through work experience.

For the student, it is about applying in the workplace the knowledge that they have learned in school. It is also an opportunity to learn about different industries. As much as it is about finding out what you do want to do, sometimes it is about finding out what you don't enjoy.

Steve Radley: I agree with all those points, not surprisingly. I think it is also an opportunity for people to explore different industries and to find out about them, and maybe to address some misconceptions. It may well be that they find out that they don't want to pursue a career in a given industry. For example, this is one of the things we do in construction: before people start their apprenticeships, they go through an Experience Construction programme for about two to four weeks. That is partly about getting into working habits, so working in a team and turning up on time every day—all of those basic things you need to do in work. It is also about finding out about the industry, and it may well be that, having done this, you decide it's not for you.

Equally, a lot of people have misconceptions about what an industry is like. The construction industry is changing a lot. There are a lot more opportunities now, including in the craft trades and things like logistics, design, modelling and data analytics. It's really an opportunity to present to people a better understanding of what the industry is like.



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Those are obviously fairly short, sharp periods. I think we may be coming on to T-levels—that is clearly different, because then we're looking at work placements and that's much more about preparing people for work and getting them ready to go on site, for example.

Ashley Hodges: In terms of the purpose of work experience, I should probably explain that we're really well known for our work getting high-profile speakers into state schools for free. We do that nationwide—about 1,000 talks a year. Last year, we fully rolled out S4S NextGen, which is about opening up places like M&G Investments, Virgin Money, the Bank of England and M&C Saatchi to state-school students who don't have networks into work experience. I'm sure you've heard that parental links are really important, and we're trying to break that down.

When we think about work experience and working with these types of stakeholders as well as our national network of secondary schools and academies, one of the things that came out of our schools and colleges steering group is that it's about awareness of the world of work. It does not necessarily have to be linked to vocation. Soft skills, as they call them, are an important bedrock to building more skills—things like professional etiquette, working in a team and communication. These are the things that the employers we work with in these various esteemed organisations recognise as being very valuable, as do schools and our teachers.

In terms of what students should take away from it, any student we speak to wants a better idea of what the world of work expects of them. What is it like? It's so different from school—they usually can't believe how different—having to be responsible for their own time. They don't know what they're going into—they might get a placement at a law firm, or it might be a construction work experience—but they want to be sure they're building transferable skills of some sort. Whatever that experience is, they want to get value. That is definitely an important component.

Robert Burley: The privilege of going last is that I can agree with the first three speakers. Certainly, in terms of what work experience is there for—giving young people an insight into the kind of career that they might want to pursue—I absolutely agree with sampling a career and then deciding that might not be for them. A key thing is also starting to look at some of the character skills that they may need to develop, like teamwork and resilience. Those are things that can also be achieved through volunteering, which is why we think that it should be viewed alongside work experience. A couple of years ago, a survey of 1,000 people who volunteered with vinspired found that their key motivation was to gain skills and experience. That's why we think that volunteering should be viewed alongside very good-quality work experience.

Q270 **Jack Payne:** My question is to all members of the panel. It is regarding the industrial strategy initiative by the Government. Does the Government's industrial strategy take enough account of the role of work experience in filling skills gaps?



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Steve Radley: There are some important elements of it. I'd probably stress, too, that some of these are more about the Government's overall strategy, not just the industrial strategy. There is more emphasis on requiring schools to promote a whole range of opportunities. You've probably heard other people talking about it as well. There tends to be a bias towards promoting people going on to A-levels and then university, which is absolutely equally valid, but it's really important that young people have information about the full range of choices, and that would include apprenticeships and also, in the near future, T-levels. I think that's really important.

I think there's a big job in terms of employers and the industry thinking about how they can deliver that. Certainly, in construction, we think it's important that people who are in school hear about people who are working in the industry and are also close to their age. We train up a network of construction careers ambassadors who engage with schools and talk about the opportunities there.

The other thing I would emphasise as being a really important aspect of the Government's industrial strategy is T-levels. These are due to be introduced from 2020; I think they are starting in construction. The idea includes two key reforms. One is to give learners more breadth in their first year—rather than specialising in one trade initially, they'll get a more general introduction into the industry. Secondly, there will be a work placement of about 45 days. We might come on to the fact that that is very difficult to deliver, but it's really important as a way of helping more people who go through further education to prepare for work.

A statistic that we see that is worrying is that only a quarter of young people who go through a FE course in construction end up working in the industry. That is a massive waste of resources, and we need to do something about it. One of the things we can do is deliver good-quality work placements.

Ashley Hodges: Thinking about the specific question of how the industrial strategy looks at work experience and at gaps, you'll be interested to know that I could not find any mention of work experience in the industrial strategy. That is a bit of a shame because it is massively overlooked. All the organisations we work with—including Turner & Townsend in construction, Cisco Systems in digital and tech, as well as legal firms—talk about young people having total misconceptions, or a lack of knowledge, about what is available to them. They need to be made aware at a much earlier age. Work experience—whether a two-day taster experience or a week or two-week long placement—can be a really useful way to fight the misconceptions and preconceptions that many employers talk about.

Although work experience is not mentioned in the industrial strategy, there are lots of mentions of T-levels and the use of a schools strategy to look at numeracy and literacy. The CBI's 2017 employer skills gap report, they are really interested more in things such as attitude, communication skills and foreign languages, which are the areas with the largest reported



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skills gaps. Work experience can do a lot to address that, but it is not currently formally outlined.

Robert Burley: The other thing that is missing from the industrial strategy is any mention of volunteering, which is an interesting parallel. That does not really chime with discussions that we have been having across Government. Departments like the DWP, Department for Education and DCMS are starting to really engage on the importance of volunteering, so it would be good to see Government strategy starting to reflect that. It is really great that groups like this Committee are looking at volunteering alongside work experience.

Bhavina Bharkhada: In short, no it does not. You asked us to keep our answers short.

It is important to recognise that even career strategy is not really mentioned in the industrial strategy. It only recognises the shortage in STEM skills, which is important for our sector because we have a huge gap through the people pillar. All of the initiatives that have been suggested rely on having enough student demand to study STEM subjects, and at the moment we do not have that. So how do you create it? Through work experience and making sure that young people are exposed to opportunities, which they may or may not enjoy. That is why EEF have a "Meet the Maker" programme: it is an opportunity for them to see what young people are doing in factories across the UK. The more exposure young people have to such programmes, the more chance that they will consider a career in STEM. There are lots of misconceptions about what a career in STEM is like, so if we can address those through work experience, we will go a long way towards tackling some of those problems.

Q271 **Mun Wu:** My question is aimed towards Steve and Bhavina. What does the typical construction or manufacturing work experience student look like? For example, what do we know about participation in terms of socioeconomic background, gender, ethnicity or health/disability?

Bhavina Bharkhada: It affects our industry as a whole. We have a slightly imbalanced male to female ratio: at the moment 85% of workers in our industry are male and only 15% are female. There is a lot of work to do in our industry to change that. Manufacturers are not just sitting tight but are changing things. Just this morning, Rolls-Royce announced that there will be a 50:50 split between male and female work experience students, and they have also seen a 20% increase in BAME students taking work experience opportunities, so things are changing. There was a great IET campaign for young female engineers. It was mentioned in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which some of you might read. The idea is to change perceptions. Slowly, we will get more young women in our industry, but there is a lot of work still to do.

Steve Radley: We are probably reporting a fairly similar picture, even if we are maybe slightly further behind. If you look at the typical intake of young people in construction apprenticeships, which are similar to work



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experience, they tend to be white and male. They also tend to have less educational attainment, so quite a lot of the people going into construction at entry level at 16—potentially through work experience—tend to have left school, often with not-very-good GCSE results. There is a lot of work to do to get their English and maths up to a better standard.

If we look more recently at the profile of the 18 to 24-year-olds who are going into construction—probably through work experience—it is becoming a bit more female. I think around a quarter of them are female, which, I think, reflects the change in the range of opportunities and that the industry is getting better at promoting that. There are two key things we really need to do to address this: first, really work hard to promote the range of opportunities in the industry, so that people actually want to take them. Secondly, it is important to provide a bit more structure to work experience and make it much more accessible to people who might be taking it.

One of the issues we have as an industry is that construction recruits in a very informal way. Often people will take on, either for a job or work experience, somebody they know, be it a friend of the family or a relation. You end up with the industry recruiting in its own image. I think we need a more structured approach to offering work experience, if we are to address that.

Q272 Mun Wu: Following on from that, is it important that these industries widen their appeal beyond those young people who would usually consider them as a career option?

Steve Radley: Absolutely. We have a huge challenge in terms of the number of jobs we need to fill over the next five years. We need to bring over 30,000 people in each year. At the moment, for example, we rely a lot on migrant workers from abroad. Around one in seven people working in the industry are from abroad. After Brexit, none of us know exactly how it will pan out, but it is clear that we need to recruit and develop more of our own workforce. We need to widen up the number of people who are coming into our industry and taking work experience if we are to fill those skill needs.

Bhavina Bharkhada: Yes, to build on what Steve said, we need to cast that net as wide as possible. One way to do that is to ensure that all those work experience programmes are available to everyone. How do young people find those work experience programmes? Is it with a broker in the middle? Is it online? Is it that you just approach your local employer?

I just wanted to share one example with you. Last year there were 171,000 applications to study engineering, but only 3% of those applicants actually went on to work in engineering. That is the challenge that we are facing. The pipeline is so leaky at the moment. How do you plug that bath without the water all spilling out? Work experience is one way of doing that.

Q273 Jason Stewart: My question is to Ashley. What role do you see your



programmes playing in widening the range of options that young people might consider for their careers?

Ashley Hodges: I think Steve and Bhavina brought up a really great point about the awareness level. Turner & Townsend, BSI Group and Energy Investments are really prestigious companies. If there is an image issue in construction, we would look to tackle that. For those at Energy Investments, we have a pretty good quote from one of their HR departments, which helped to look at work experience. They are a hidden industry—investment—so it is something that you cannot aspire to if you don't see it.

Our role is very much what Bhavina was saying about having a brokerage. It is unrealistic to have schools calling up every employer. They do not have the time or the money. It is really difficult. As one of our employers said, "I can't have 50 schools call me up and deal with each of them." So using something such as S4SNextGen, which is a safeguarded free portal for our employers, focused on students who have high need and lack of access to networks and really esteemed workplaces across industries is a really special role to play as a facilitator.

It is a big job for us to translate those opportunities. How do you get students to consider something new? We do a lot with the automotive industry, for example. If you do a work experience saying, "Come down to a dealership," you can bet that teachers and students will overlook that sometimes, because they have preconceptions and misconceptions about what that is. It is different if you say, "Come and see how a world-class consumer brand or retail business operates," or in the case of Turner & Townsend, "Come and see how an international project management consultancy, who are building some of the biggest projects in London, operates."

We usually break down the skills into "What skills can you gain and who is this good for?" for example, enthusiastic, willing-to-learn, likes problem solving, and, "What will you learn?" for example, teamworking and communication skills. That translation of opportunity can really help. From our point of view it has helped fill some of these placements. That is the role that programmes such as ours can play, in addition to what we are most complimented on and where we have built our niche, namely that we open up access to these really hard-to-reach organisations.

Interestingly it is not just a problem in construction. A lot of these companies—most of them gave details in our evidence—have ad hoc work experience placements that come through clients and family links. They just didn't know how to make it strategic. How do you create the structure around it? It is even things like we have an application system where some of our employers look at 50% female intake if they are in STEM and they look at BAME background. They need help with providing some of that structure—it is definitely a problem with almost all industries—and schools do too.

Q274 **Daria Eckert:** This is to Steve and Bhavina. What do you think are the



main misconceptions from employers in your sector when it comes to taking on a work experience student?

Steve Radley: There are three reasons that employers say that they don't take on work experience students or they take on less than they would ideally like to. Two of them are probably misconceptions that can be addressed, and one is probably a correct perception that needs work.

The first is a lack of suitable candidates. That misconception is probably because the industry is not casting its net wide enough. Picking up the points we made earlier, it is probably only looking at a narrow section of the economy and it needs to attract a wider range of candidates coming in.

One of the other main concerns is about health and safety and whether they would be able to get insurance. Clearly, if young people come on to a construction site, it can be dangerous if they are not properly supervised. So that is an issue, but those issues can be overcome. The industry, working with the Department for Work and Pensions, has recently come up with a guidance booklet to address that, and that is something that I think we would like to see used more and more.

The other perception that I would say is not a misconception is that it is time-consuming. In construction, 96% of firms are tiny. They are two to nine employees. They are micro-firms. It does take time to supervise young people when they are doing work experience in construction, so we need to find ways to make it easier.

Bhavina Bharkhada: I again agree with Steve. Some firms approach work experience and think it might be too burdensome and there might be too much administration involved, but once the programme is set up and is running, they can see how it adds value to their business. Seven out of 10 manufacturers offer work experience, so actually it is not something that we have come across that often—we see it from the other side, where there are lots of misconceptions from the students who do not want to go into a manufacturing workplace. I don't think they quite realise sometimes that you could be a designer of jackets for U2 or you could work at Glastonbury or design the bodywork for a Jaguar F-type. You are an engineer and you can work in manufacturing—it is not just about maths and physics. You need to be creative, you need to think outside the box and you need to be a problem solver. The minute they see that, they think about manufacturing and engineering completely differently. There are thousands of manufacturers across the UK who are so keen to showcase that.

Q275 **Daria Eckert:** Both of you mentioned a wider range of candidates and people not knowing that they can access it. Do you think that work-related learning starting in primary school would help those misconceptions, for example the lack of visibility of women in construction?

Steve Radley: Absolutely. One of the troubles is that a lot of engagement with schools is at 14, 15 and 16. That is absolutely great, but it is often



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too late. You do need to get in earlier to address the misconceptions and get people interested in the industry. Clearly, you are going to be doing that in a different and rather less structured way—you may be using a lot of play and real-life examples—but it is absolutely vital that you engage at the earliest stage possible.

Bhavina Bharkhada: That is why campaigns like the Year of Engineering are so great, because they tackle the issue from a younger age. There are really simple things like letting girls play with Lego. It is about building those cognitive skills, which are quite often overlooked. Lots of the stereotypes start when we are very, very young, so if we can start to change that, it would be really helpful.

One thing I would say is that when you have campaigns such as the Year of Engineering, it shouldn't just be for one year. 2018 should be the start of a campaign for many years to encourage young girls and women into our sector. It doesn't just have to be a new stock of entrants coming in. If you are a physics or maths teacher, and you are not really sure what kind of career you want to take, you can do a bit of work experience, come back into the industry and see what you can do as an engineer. That is just as important as it is for young people to see it.

Q276 **Daria Eckert:** On some of the other misconceptions we talked about, who do you think is best placed to present messages to confront those? For example, would that be the Government, other businesses or schools?

Bhavina Bharkhada: I think there is a role for everyone to play here. For the Government and the Careers and Enterprise Company, we think work experience should be made compulsory. Now you have to have seven engagements, if we can use the CEC to match young people to employers, they can get really good quality placements, but it depends on that matching and making sure that you have the right broker.

For schools, it is actually delivering on their statutory duty to provide impartial careers advice. At the moment, kids probably do not get told about the fantastic options they have within vocational education. They have a statutory duty to provide that, so they should call on employers to be able to provide that.

For people like us, EEF, who represent those companies, it is to continue campaigns such as "Women in manufacturing" and "Meet the maker", and the EIT "Young woman engineer" campaign. There is a role for everyone.

Robert Burley: It is really important to be aware of any misconceptions about your industry and to address them head on. That is true across the piece. I was very interested in the session you had with young people last week, when someone said that they would not volunteer, because they felt that universities did not recognise that as a proper way to gain skills.

I spoke to a university admissions tutor this week and relayed that, and they were really upset by that comment, because they felt that they had done a lot of work, but they need to be aware that that is what young



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people think—that if it is a choice between two activities, and there is a misconception, they may act on that.

It is beholden on all groups to be seen to act to assuage people's fears. It is very interesting that the CIPD found that roughly two thirds of employers recognise that someone at entry level who has volunteered will have great skills to join the workforce, but only 16% of employers would ask about that at application stage and only a third at interview. It is about putting practices in place to reassure people that those misconceptions are being dealt with.

Steve Radley: Rather than just repeating and agreeing with what everyone has said, I will make a couple of other points. First, ultimately, it is down to industry to do it, because employers in the industry will understand what it is about in a way that Government, say, will not. One of the things that industry can do, as well as engaging with schools, is to provide short-duration opportunities to have an experience of the industry, which might lead to doing work experience later on.

One of the things that the construction industry does is the Open Doors programme, which is a programme of activities for a fortnight. This year, we had 5,200 opportunities for people to go on site. That may well be young people, or adults who are in work but are looking at other opportunities, but often, it will be parents as well. It is often really important to address the misconceptions of parents about what the industry is like.

Bhavina Bharkhada: Can I add one thing? One of the easiest and probably most effective ways to tackle those misconceptions is to have an apprentice or a graduate go back into a school. There is nothing worse than having a middle-aged white man talk about engineering—I have heard it myself. It does not resonate. What would resonate would be a young person going back into a school and saying, "Look what I do every day." It is about tackling those perceptions, because they can relate to that young person and they see them as a role model. If we can somehow facilitate that—some manufacturers do it, but it is not always that easy—that would be really effective.

Q277 **Caitlin O'Regan:** I will go from the slightly negative to a slightly more positive element. I will address this question to Ashley. Following on from something you mentioned earlier about Speakers for Schools' work last year, I would like to ask, in the wider labour market, what encourages businesses to offer work placements?

Ashley Hodges: I will come back to that in a moment, but I want to comment quickly on the earlier question about whether we need to do something around primary age. Speakers for Schools and S4SNextGen focus on a specific age range and aspiration insights and inspiration, but Primary Futures, for example, does exactly that—it takes free volunteers into primary schools. We all have to play different parts at different stages.

It is the same for bringing in apprentices. Yes, we send in high-profile people who are sometimes older white males currently in the industry, but we tell them to bring an apprentice. I just wanted to pick up on that and how important that is, and how organisations like ours are trying really hard to work with those other organisations, such as Barclays Life Skills. I could have sat next to Kate last week and echoed everything she said. We consulted with them on forming our very specific programme.

In terms of encouraging the wider labour market, one of the points we make in our written evidence is that people think that bigger, sophisticated, more elite businesses can do it more easily, and there is an important point that it is hard for everyone. In terms of offering it, we detail in our written evidence a lot of the different barriers that employers face. The biggest ones echo exactly what Steve said around clarity. If you google how to host work experience, you'll get taken to most of the university websites and find no clear guidance on safeguarding requirements. We find a lot of them think they need DBS checks. They don't understand that, usually, they already have the employer insurance that they need.

Buy-in is a big issue. We detail how our network, uniquely, works with people like Anne Richards, CEO of M&G Investments, so when she strikes up a conversation with her HR department, all of a sudden there is that buy-in to prioritise this. Most CSR and HR departments really welcome a chance to prioritise it, but there usually needs to be support. I spend a lot of time, with my programme manager, having strategic conversations along the lines of, "No, you're probably not going to hire after this, so why should you do it? This is how it can help you with your gender imbalance or socioeconomic imbalance."

Then there's the issue of flexibility. Even though firms we work with are very elite in what they do, sometimes they're 20-person tech companies in Old Street and they can't imagine hosting a student. One of the biggest misconceptions is that work experience is a 15-year-old at your elbow for eight hours a day. No matter who we talk to through our schools, young people and employers talk about varied work experience: activities, CV workshops, a chance to meet apprentices and careers advice, as well as doing some actual work and projects. It can actually be very flexible.

We spend a lot of time on consultation and how you fit this in if you are the 20-person tech company or if you are the Bank of England and you have a six-week security background check process and it has to be formalised. But they need that support. Right now, with Government particularly, there is not a lot of clarity on what baseline safeguarding in work experience looks like, so we spend a lot of time on that. I would encourage people. It's not easy; it takes work, as everyone has said. As Deirdre said, this is hard work. But it's possible—where there's a will, there's a way.

Q278 Caitlin O'Regan: What I'm getting from that is the idea of reassuring employers.

Ashley Hodges: They need example structures. We spend a lot of time working with people like Barclays Life Skills. As they have said, there are



already a lot of materials out there, but even we find that it is useful to have example models for programmes. What a one-week work experience looks like in a production setting like a TV studio is very different to what it would look like in a finance setting. So we spend a lot of time literally creating PDFs of examples to inspire firms to go away with their HR teams and decide what it can look like. Structure is the biggest thing, but they need examples, and usually in order to get started they need just some baseline materials, if not specific help from organisations like ours.

Q279 Caitlin O'Regan: I think someone will get on to that more later on. What advantages do state schools, which your organisation deals with, and schools in general get from using organisations like yours to broker placements, versus arranging them internally?

Ashley Hodges: If we think about state schools particularly—this was even in a recent Ofsted report—most state schools rely on parental connections to facilitate work experience. I won't repeat all the evidence showing how that replicates issues with social mobility and access and industry issues. I was at the Education and Employers international research conference last week, and one of the teachers came out and said, "We'd love to do more of this, but right now our careers co-ordinator is also the head of maths and also has three other jobs." There's just not the necessary amount of provision. Again, I think Deirdre Hughes detailed that. There's just not the bandwidth in schools to do it.

Then there's the logical administrative side, in terms of not reinventing the wheel and wasting time. We go to great lengths to try to connect with organisations—I'm even thinking of some of the trade bodies—and schools, so that if I'm an employer, I'm not spending loads of time approaching a hundred different schools that are also being approached by a hundred different employers. Schools don't have the time to be approaching all those different employers.

There is a tertiary factor, which is really important. Just like students and regular members of the public, teachers have blind spots. Maybe they have never heard of your company or they don't think favourably about your industry. They have biases and blind spots, like everyone else. With organisations like ours, you might come there for Google or Virgin Money placements and end up with someone, like Turner & Townsend, that maybe you've never heard of and never would have considered. So I think we play an important facilitation role.

Q280 Caitlin O'Regan: Thank you very much. Just looking at this very simply and especially at the work you have done in the past year, what advantages are there for young people from it?

Ashley Hodges: Our facilitation?

Caitlin O'Regan: The brokerage.

Ashley Hodges: It's the access to employers who you usually would not have any familial access to or access through your school, and awareness raising. When they go through our search process, they are going via



looking at aptitudes and interests, and it helps people consider brands and companies they have never heard of and industries they have never considered.

Robert Burley: I will just add that brokerage has a key role in making things simple for schools. It takes that workload off teachers. vInspired provides a brokerage platform where young people can search roles in their locality. We also provides a specialist service for schools, which about 400 schools use. It is a secure website where pupils can log on and see the volunteering opportunities within their own school—teachers might put in sports coaching for younger children or helping in the school library or something like that—and also the opportunities available in the community outside the school.

It boils down to exactly those points around opportunities that they may never have thought of before. However, because those opportunities are presented in a single portal that they can access, it suddenly opens up a whole new world to them. It just makes life that bit easier for teachers, who clearly don't have the time to talk to 40 employers or charities in the area to find those placements individually.

Chair: I am really sorry to interject. We appreciate your evidence but we are a bit pushed for time, so could everyone try to be brief? Thank you.

Q281 **Max Parry:** This question is open to everyone, but we will start with you, Robert, because you raised the point, so if you could expand on it, we will then move on to the other panel members. Do you see social action and volunteering as a replacement for work experience or is it complementary?

Robert Burley: It is very much complementary—it is certainly not a replacement. If a young person wants to gain experience of working in a bank, volunteering is clearly not appropriate. They will not volunteer in a bank. However, if a young person wants an insight into the world of retail or customer service, and at the same time wants to give something back to their community, volunteering in a charity shop or at a frontline event is a fantastic way to get that.

The only thing I add is that the motivations for why people volunteer are quite interesting. There is definitely a strong motivation to do some social good and to give something back, but often the primary motivation for volunteering—based on the survey of 1,000 young people that I mentioned—is to gain skills and experience. It should not be seen as an either/or. They can sit alongside each other.

Bhavina Bharkhada: I agree—it has to be complementary. Looking at our industry, work experience is structured in the way it is because you have to undertake health and safety training. You cannot be on the shop floor unless you know how to operate the machinery, so it is very much on a complementary basis.

Ashley Hodges: I completely agree that it should be complementary. The evidence shows that the more and varied activities, and the more types of work experience and opportunities with employers, the better.

Steve Radley: I completely agree with those answers. I don't think there is anything to add to them.

Q282 **Max Parry:** Robert, are there any groups of young people for whom volunteering is more beneficial than work experience?

Robert Burley: I don't know if there's any groups for whom the outcomes are more beneficial, but there are certainly groups who are not currently accessing volunteering and are therefore missing out on the opportunities that arise from it. There is evidence of a big socioeconomic gap. It is certainly true that people from less-deprived backgrounds tend to have access to more volunteering. That might be down to misconceptions or time for the more-deprived groups, or because they may have to have a Saturday job.

However, it is worrying that the groups who could perhaps benefit more, because they have not done it before—people who are maybe not in education, employment or training—are those who aren't accessing it. It is a bit of a Catch-22. The skills you can gain from volunteering are not there for you if you don't access it.

Q283 **Max Parry:** You have just addressed the socioeconomic gap in participation in social action. Why is that and how can it be addressed?

Robert Burley: Some of it is down to the perception of volunteering. Some people may see it as something for an affluent, middle-class pupil to do. Sometimes it is down to time pressures or family pressures. vinspired is trying to confront that and to open up volunteering to people who may not have considered it before.

We have just launched the Inspired programme, which at its heart has the Inspired card. It is almost a shop window into volunteering. It is a way to get young people interested by working with our partners to provide to some sort of discounts through the card, but then also to start that conversation with them about volunteering.

The key thing about the programme is that it provides personal development opportunities to people who may not have had them before. By volunteering and coming to vinspired, we work with partners across all industries to provide things like behind-the-scenes skills masterclasses that can help young people to develop the skills that they may not have access to. There are ways that you can engage the people who aren't yet volunteering.

Q284 **Chair:** I am just going to interject with a question to Ashley. Do you think that project-based learning such as team design competitions are equivalent to the benefits someone can get from placements?

Ashley Hodges: It is an interesting question. We hear great feedback from teachers and employers who run things like day-long competitions.



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We absolutely support that, as well as insight days. They can be great, particularly if they are well structured, focusing on the skills and reflecting the skills that someone can build.

The thing about work experience, and the reason we also work with an employer to do either one week or two weeks, is the ebb and flow of a workplace is not something that you really get to see if you are just on a special day, where everyone is a bit pumped up and excited, and everyone is talking to you. From talking to some of the organisations during our employers symposiums, it is important to see, not that work is boring, but that work will not always be what you want to do. It is not always going to be super-active. People need to divert their attention. There is definitely a benefit to actually seeing what makes a workplace tick and what it takes to make a business run.

Q285 **Chair:** So you think it's complementary?

Ashley Hodges: Definitely. I think it is a great way to get wider employee engagement. Not everyone can host a student, or they might initially be timid about that. They do not know how it is going to go. Sometimes they will host an insight day and get more staff buy-in to hosting students for longer placements.

Q286 **Dominic Jones:** At vinspired, how do you ensure that the volunteering opportunities that you provide are good quality?

Robert Burley: That is a key point and concern for us. When an organisation comes to us to post roles on our site, it first has to prove that it is a legitimate charity or community group. For large charities, that is a fairly simple task in terms of whether they are a registered charity. We also work with very small community groups, so we will do some due diligence to make sure that anyone who approaches us to post a role is able to do that.

In order to be able to post roles, we also have to be assured that they have the policies in place to support volunteers. In particular, when it comes to working with young people, they have to have a safeguarding policy. We have to be sure that they can support them.

In terms of when the role itself is posted, to make sure that it is a legitimate role, organisations that work with us have to be very transparent about the kind of activities that a young person will be doing and, importantly, the kind of skills that they are going to gain. We are working with an organisation called SkillsBuilder. Very shortly, when you post a role on our site you will have to tick one or more of the eight skills that SkillsBuilder has identified as ubiquitous skills for life—things like teamwork, communication and those kind of things. Then they have to list the activities that will do that, so when a young person comes to apply for the role it is transparent and they are aware of what they can expect when they walk through the door.

Q287 **Dominic Jones:** Is there a risk that volunteering is doing someone else's job for free, and is there anything in place to protect people against



exploitation in their placements?

Robert Burley: I think some of the points I raised in the first answer cover the exploitation bit, such as the safeguarding that is in place. If you are going somewhere to volunteer, you are walking in with your eyes open that you are giving your time to that organisation. It is then beholden on that organisation to make sure that you are not doing someone's job. If you find out on day one that you are doing a job because someone left yesterday, that clearly is inappropriate. Those mechanisms are in place to make sure that that does not happen.

There is an onus on the charity sector to make sure that we treat volunteers properly. vinspired was very pleased to be named in the full-time social action review as an organisation that should take the lead in creating guidelines for the whole sector about how to work well with volunteers, particularly young volunteers, to stop that happening.

Q288 **Caitlin O'Regan:** Ashley, to what extent is good work experience provision in schools a question of financial resources?

Ashley Hodges: I think it is very strongly linked in some ways. If you listen to teachers talk about this—I think Deirdre Hughes said something about this—the fact of the matter is, particularly in state schools, under-resourced schools and schools that are stretched usually have someone usually wearing multiple hats who is in charge. It therefore does not get the attention it needs. There is a staffing link to the provision on the financial side in that sense.

There are lots of free services out there, like our own, but I had a teacher detail to me, when he switched over from being just a classroom teacher to taking on work-related pathways, that he went from five emails a day to 100 emails a day. He just literally does not have the time to do it and dedicate to it, so I think there is a very strong link there, or at least there is something that could be done. I know that giving schools more finance to bandwidth this kind of activity is something that has been fed back by the Careers and Enterprise Company and other organisations.

Q289 **Chair:** For the role of a careers leader, where you have someone who probably will be wearing multiple hats, do you think that they need more funding?

Ashley Hodges: I would say that, at most schools, they don't have that singular person—that is a problem itself—or they could have more people. So yes, there could be more funding there.

Q290 **Caitlin O'Regan:** Following on from that, I have a question taken from the evidence that was submitted by young people. Do private schools necessarily offer better careers advice or work experience because they have those financial resources?

Ashley Hodges: We obviously work with the state school side of it, but actually there are two things. Education and Employers—a few years ago I happened to work for them when they did this—did a study of the employer engagement in independent schools. It is partially financial, but



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it is also just in their DNA; it is part of the cultural and social capital that they have through their alumni.

I also got in touch with Dr Anthony Seldon, who was the headmaster of Wellington College and Brighton College for many years. I put what we understand about it—this is a part of their DNA; it happens informally, through links a lot of the time, in independent schools. He said absolutely that is true in a lot of what goes on; there is still about the same amount of volume but the quality of access is something the parents are paying for.

The other thing he noted was that work experience was incredibly important, even in an independent school. When they started Wellington Academy, a state-funded school, from the private school, the first thing they did was try to open up the alumni links for work experience. He worried that in state schools, because of the obsession with exams, the importance of work experience is often overlooked.

Q291 Caitlin O'Regan: Rob, I saw that you had a reaction to the question when it came up. I wondered whether you had any other evidence to provide.

Robert Burley: Around provision in private schools?

Caitlin O'Regan: Yes.

Robert Burley: No, not so much. I think volunteering can be a fantastic way to build the social capital that you might not have access to through other means. There is really good evidence that participating in social action helps close social gaps. We are the provider of the National Citizen Service in the north-east. Some recent evidence found that participation in that programme helps reduce the social gap, because you are mixing with people from a different background; you are making connections that you may not be able to make through your school or through other avenues. The evidence suggests that volunteering and social action can play a major role in helping close that gap and providing social capital. That social capital might come as second nature for someone in private school who has the family network, but someone at state school might not have that in their school life.

Q292 Caitlin O'Regan: Following on from the evidence I was given last week, one of the witnesses on the first panel suggested that an academy might have a similar kind of work experience offering as an independent school. We were also looking to see whether the work experience provided in, say, academies, grammar schools or free schools might be better, because they are privately funded.

Ashley Hodges: We work with quite a few different multi-academy trusts. It depends, because England has a very different and more sporadic landscape when it comes to how these things are done, and how well they are done, and they might be done very well in some academies. Usually, in our experience, they do tend to have a fully funded careers position, for example, and that might be different if you are at a comprehensive that



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has different funding arrangements, but whether or not they have better links will come down to geography. It will also come down to how much that is a part of the executive principal's vision, and there are some who do it really well. I understand that Ark schools, for example, guarantee work experience at some point, and there are benefits and there are setbacks to that as well.

Therefore, I do not think that it is as simple as that, particularly as most academies are new—and free schools—so they might not have the alumni networks. With grammar schools, again, based on what I know, their alumni networks might come into it a bit more, but it is really sporadic in England; it is very much about where you are, the history of the school, and the staff. We have tried to draw patterns, but it is very difficult.

Robert Burley: It is also about the culture of the school. It doesn't matter if it is a private school or a state school. I visited a state school in the north-east to see our NCS work, and the first thing you see when you walk in is a montage of alumni. That really struck me, because it is something I don't often see in state schools. They said they simply took the step of emailing their database of former pupils to ask, "What are you up to?" and they found they had 200 former pupils who were in amazing careers—one was an Olympian and one was a Paralympian—which they had lost sight of. Perhaps it is just about tapping into that culture of alumni that you might not necessary have.

Caitlin O'Regan: Can I just ask you to specify what NCS stands for?

Robert Burley: It is the National Citizen Service.

Ashley Hodges: Just to echo that, the one thing I have seen in the eight years I have been working at Speakers for Schools and working with this many schools—and this is echoed by other educationists—is that what usually determines how well a school is doing this, in a lot of ways, is actually head teacher vision and how much it is a part of the culture of the school. It is really not necessarily down to the label of the school.

Q293 **Mun Wu:** Moving on, my question is addressed to all members of the panel. Is there a risk of businesses and schools or colleges becoming overwhelmed by the wide range of providers, brokers and engagement initiatives in operation?

Chair: Can I just interject? We are really struggling for time.

Steve Radley: There is a real risk. It is important that the employers that take part understand what is involved and how to go about it. That is one reason why we have developed a network of 800 construction ambassadors—those are the ones that are trained up and understand how to go about it. The Careers Enterprise Company has a really important role in co-ordinating it and ensuring that we do not have one school deluged by 10 employers looking to engage with them one week, while schools down the road have no one. It is really important that we start to co-ordinate that better, and that is a key role for the CEC.



Ashley Hodges: Just to echo that, yes there is a risk of that. It is really important that organisations such as ours see it as a responsibility to collaborate with others in the sector and to understand the unique expertise we provide. On the same point, Barclays Life Skills is a very different programme from ours and it complements things such as GoThinkBig and what the CEC does with advisers. There are different pieces in this puzzle, but there is absolutely a risk of trying to bring more into this space, and ensuring that employers and some of the engineering bodies that we connect with understand how to utilise our service.

Bhavina Bharkhada: The Royal Academy of Engineering estimated that there are more than 300 STEM initiatives. London Colleges found that there were 240 careers providers just in London. It is confusing and complex, and we need to balance choice with that really confusing and complex landscape.

Q294 **Mun Wu:** Do you have any recommendations on how this risk could be managed?

Ashley Hodges: There is no central point to go to for the information. I have had schools call me up because, for example, we are very supportive of what the Careers and Enterprise Company is doing but, because we are not funded by them, we are not listed with their new activity providers. There are other gaps, and most of our schools and colleges think that they will be the kind of umbrella to go to find out what is on offer. One of the careers people I interviewed said that was the hardest part about it—there is no central point of information. That is not the same as saying that it has to be rigid and provided in certain way and only by certain providers; there is just no central point of information where teachers and employers can find these things.

Bhavina Bharkhada: It is interesting, because UCAS is the go-to for anything to do with universities. Young people say, "I've done A-levels, so what university should I go to? I'll just go to UCAS." But you don't have that for work experience. You have the National Apprenticeship Service, but not many young people are aware of that. Having that umbrella organisation is really important. We should also embrace the choice with all those different broker services, because they know what they need in their local area. It is just about getting that balance right.

Steve Radley: Can I just add something on that point? In my local school we were very lucky, because we had an organisation called the business enterprise partnership, which was able to provide that sort of brokering service so that young people understood what the opportunities were. In large parts of the country that is not the case. There is a real divide between people who have parents who know about these opportunities and can make them happen and those who do not. If we could get more information available about what the work experience opportunities are right across the economy, that would be a major contribution.

Q295 **Sanah Kashyap:** One of the ideas that we are interested in is exploring a Government-backed hub for work experience opportunities and/or



information. If there was such a thing, what would you like it to look like?

Bhavina Bharkhada: I would say no further duplication, because there are so many other hubs. The Careers Enterprise Company is already trying to create those hubs in opportunity cold spots. Do we need another hub in that area? Is it something that we could embed in the existing infrastructure? I would not want to create too many different brokers, because then you are not really sure where you need to go. It is about getting that balance right.

Steve Radley: I echo the point about avoiding duplication. It would be a wise move for the Government to look at what is already out there and see where they have already invested. A hub idea sounds very similar to the hub that we provide for volunteering. If one was to be created, it must usefully signpost people who wanted to gain experience through volunteering to us, rather than duplicate a platform that provides another hub for volunteering.

Ashley Hodges: Echoing that, if there was an information hub that signposted to what is available, that would be great. A lot of us have done a lot of consultation with our employers on what that application process should look like and so on, and it would not only duplicate but probably waste the Government's money to do something like an advertising portal, but it would be useful to have a central point of information.

Steve Radley: One of the things the hubs could look at is building in more information on the young person's experience of doing the work experience. It is still extremely mixed. Some employers do an excellent job here; others are still ticking the box and have not really thought about how to go about it. More information about what sort of experience people have would be really useful so that other people make good choices.

Q296 **Sanah Kashyap:** Overall, would you say that it is about not necessarily duplicating the work that is already there but integrating what is already there? Is that the general view?

Bhavina Bharkhada: Yes, don't spread the jam too thin.

Ashley Hodges: I know that one of the questions we will come to is about what could be done to make us operate more effectively and efficiently. We spend so much time having to bring together very simplistic materials that other people are using about baseline quality, work experience and the different models that exist. Barclays LifeSkills and the BBC are already sharing these things. The fact that there is no central place and no signposting of some of these initiatives, and that we all just have to decide on our own to connect with each other, is one of the issues at the moment.

Q297 **Sanah Kashyap:** So if we are looking at the integration aspect, Ashley and Robert, how would your organisations feed into such a resource?

Robert Burley: I think it is more about signposting. If a work experience hub was created, it would be about making sure that if someone selected the skills they wanted to gain there was an easy way for them to realise



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that they could do volunteering and link over into our service rather than trying to post it again. That is the key thing.

Ashley Hodges: Yes, don't overcomplicate it. Signposting is the most important thing—and consulting us on how things are signposted. We sometimes have people signpost to us and inaccurately describe what we can provide. It is just a bit of consultation and signposting.

Q298 **Zara Janahi:** Ashley, you have already answered my question, so I will ask the rest of the panel: what single thing could the Government do to help deliver your programmes more effectively and efficiently?

Steve Radley: I am going to talk about something that has just started. In the construction industry, as part of the industrial strategy, we have been given £20 million in something called the construction skills fund. People are going to bid to create 20 learning hubs around the country. That will be an opportunity for people to come on to big construction sites—big projects—and get some training or work experience in a live environment. We hope that by March 2020 that will have trained up or given work experience to about 13,000 young people and some adults, too. For us, that is probably the biggest positive thing that could be done, and it is being done.

Robert Burley: I have two very quick points. First—this sounds really boring—the Government need to recognise how important infrastructure is to the range of opportunities that are available and how we present volunteering to young people. Often the Government and funders will look at really exciting frontline projects but perhaps overlook the infrastructure stuff that lies beneath that.

Secondly, we have to recognise the power of volunteering. There is an issue at the moment whereby Jobcentre Plus should recognise young people who do a certain amount of volunteering by halving their work search time if they are on universal credit, but that does not always happen. It is about walking the walk as well as talking the talk.

Bhavina Bharkhada: In the short term, one recommendation would be to reinstate work experience for 16-year-olds, but it has to be high-quality and offer young people real experience that meets the Gatsby benchmarks. In the long term, we should have an education system that aligns with the skills needs of our economy.

Q299 **Chair:** Thank you all—your evidence has been really helpful. What we are going to do now is try to enhance and build on what you have already said. You just mentioned compulsory work experience. I am interested to hear the rest of the panel's views on that.

Ashley Hodges: We asked our employers and our schools about this. Interestingly, when we do our end-of-year impact monitoring forms with our schools network, 74% of our teachers say that they think it is either very important or essential for under-16s to have work experience, but they are very hesitant and scared of the word "compulsory", for obvious reasons. As one teacher put it to me, they are already expected to do so



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much, and there is concern about schools being expected to deliver something else that they are not funded for, and about the quality side of it, so making it compulsory might not be the way forward.

On the other side of it, I have had employers tell me that they would welcome compulsory work experience, from the point of view that they think that not enough young people are getting it and there are too few people picking up the pieces to offer it. I think the UCAS statistic from 2015 was that 66% of employers expect work experience when they are hiring, yet only 38% offer it, so there is definitely an issue there. Whether or not it should be compulsory, I don't know, but there should definitely be more to show off and incentivise the employers who are doing this great work and what it does for the skills gap and what it does for young people.

Steve Radley: I think I am in the camp that it should be compulsory. I think it was a great shame that was taken away. I think there are really big benefits for employers and young people from doing it. However, if it is compulsory, there is clearly a duty on employers to make sure it is good quality. So I think that employers' organisations, such as ourselves, have a really key role in making sure people have a really beneficial experience from it.

Q300 **Chair:** Thank you. Ashley, you said that you need to reduce parents' influence with work experience. Do you need to educate parents if you are going to do that?

Ashley Hodges: Sorry, I am not sure whether I said that at any point, because we don't really work with parents. But either way, if you are asking about the role of parents in influencing career decisions, I think that all the employers we work with and schools—as a school governor as well—wish we had more interface time with parents, to help them understand the options.

About three years ago, a very interesting O2 survey about digital skills showed that one in 10 parents actively discouraged their children from taking up a digital career, which does not really show awareness of how the market is changing. There needs to be work interfacing with parents, but at the same time we have to be realistic that the parents who engage best sometimes are from the families who are a lot more stable. It is similar to the issue with working: when people are in work, they are not necessarily able to engage with things like insights days hosted by employers. It is a real problem, and something that employers and schools feed back to us, as they wish they could inform parents a bit better.

Q301 **Dominic Jones:** What effect do you think the Careers and Enterprise Company will have in helping schools and businesses build relationships? That is for all the panel.

Bhavina Bharkhada: It will have an impact, but actually scaling it up to be able to impact all areas across the country will be a challenge. How do you make sure that your local manufacturer in rural Leicestershire can use the CEC and contact schools in central Leicestershire? It will be difficult. Sometimes it comes back to funding. Is it funded enough to be able to



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scale up in that way? Are employers really going to be supported, and are schools going to have the right contact with CEC to be able to reach out to employers?

Q302 **Dominic Jones:** From what you have seen so far, do you think it has the potential to work?

Bhavina Bharkhada: It has potential, but whether it achieves that potential is another question.

Q303 **Dominic Jones:** What do the other panellists think?

Ashley Hodges: I am in conversation with Claudia Harris, and we are supportive of what the CEC does, even though we don't work with them directly. I am from the school of EBPs—education-business partnerships—before they were defunded. Those used to be the go-to place for schools and colleges to do all this work, and what they are essentially doing, as I understand it, is plugging that gap.

There are issues, I think, with awareness of how that works and how well it is working in some areas. I agree with you that the potential is there, but we would welcome more conversations about how organisations such as ours, which are not funded by the CEC but are doing a lot in the space, can better link up, because schools definitely think that it is meant to be this umbrella organisation, and that has not quite happened yet.

Q304 **Chair:** Steve, you mentioned that efforts to widen participation in work experience have to be led by industry, but how can Government incentivise industry to lead this?

Steve Radley: I am not sure that industry actually needs to be given any sort of financial incentive; I think it is more about making it more straightforward for industry to do it. As I said earlier, our industry is dominated by very small firms, and it is a potentially dangerous environment if people aren't supervised properly. That is very challenging.

I talked about the learning hubs that are being created. This is a programme funded by the Government for two years. What they will look at beyond that two-year period is using those facilities right across the industry, to give more opportunities for employers to offer work experience. I don't think that it is so much of an incentive, because there is a real advantage for employers in doing it; I think it is about making it more straightforward.

Ashley Hodges: I echo that the structure side and the infrastructure everyone keeps talking about is so important, to make it easier for employers of all types and sizes to be able to offer work experience. The other side of it is that, for example, we do not show off who is doing it and really contributing to this. That is something we find with the businesses we work with: when you have PwC, EY or someone doing something, all of a sudden other firms such as KPMG go, "Ooh, shouldn't we be doing that, too?" Given the fact that there is no longer an organisation that measures whether it is happening or names the people who are exemplars, there could be some positive non-financial incentivises.



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Q305 **Chair:** Does anyone have any final comments? What about a national award to encourage competition?

Ashley Hodges: That could be useful. I am in an industry where there are teaching awards, which are always great for morale, but I am not sure how much it pays off. Other sectors such as engineering have a lot more in terms of awards, and whether or not it works well—

Bhavina Bharkhada: We have EEF apprentice awards, and that goes down a treat. It brings together lots of apprentices from across the country and there is a vote on which have done well and which haven't. It celebrates their success throughout their four years of studying, because that is quite a long time. It is quite nice. Sometimes when you go down the apprenticeship route you do not have that kind of graduation, so that celebration of what they have done is fulfilling. You are ending on a high, which is quite nice.

Chair: I would like to thank you for your time. What you have said has been really helpful.