**Written evidence submitted by Elena Ewence (BYC015)**

I am a young person. As my school has recently completed work experience, I conducted a survey amongst my year and have included the results here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Okv26ZkZzX_Sc7F0uwA0wV7dySIi6PA6fhHGkdf3KSk/edit?usp=sharing>

General

1. What does “good quality work experience” look like? What do young people and businesses expect to get from it?

To me, “good quality work experience” would be where the young person is given an accurate and honest insight into the place of work experience. This should involve the young people being given a thorough run-through of what the place of work does, how it runs day-to-day and what they would be expected to do in the role they are experiencing. In addition, the young person should be given tasks to complete so they have a chance to experience the actual “work” that would be required. The young person should be well-looked after by someone responsible to ensure their safety, any questions are answered and so the work experience is well-organised. I completed very “good quality” work experience with a County Councillor (whom I met through my youth council) where I was able to shadow different departments and different activities to give me an accurate insight. In addition, I spent a day with a local MP in the Houses of Parliament where I was given the perfect ratio of shadowing as well as tasks to complete myself to have a genuine insight into the role of an MP as well as their officers. The goal for the young person is to decide whether or not this is the type of work they would like to undertake in the future which would aid in making decisions on further education and post-16 options as well as building up their CV to make them more employable candidates. The businesses should expect to get interest into their field of work and advertise to good quality candidates as well as giving young people from all backgrounds a fair opportunity to become aware of that role or being selected for that role in the future.

Here are three word summaries provided by students in my year.

Respected, worthwhile and educational
Organised, professional, useful
Enriching, interesting, fun
lots of involvement
Interesting, Relevant, not free labour
Educational - Interesting - Inspiring
Busy, engaging and educational
Stress-free, friendly, educational
Relevant to future
Informative, interesting, challenging
Eye-opening, inspiring, involving (ie. you get involved instead of just watching)
Useful, productive, relevant
Useful, informative, organised
Educating, interesting, informative
engaging, friendly environment, helpful
Useful, interesting, fun
Involved, educational and fun
Realistic, Productive, Knowledgeable
Informative, enjoyable, structured
Authentic experience
Informative, professional, productive
Insightful, realistic, engaging
Challenging, inspiring, development
insightful, interesting, inspiring
informative, consistent, helpful
-Useful, challenging, interactive.
Educational, challenging, useful

 4. How do differences between young people (eg. geographic location, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, disability) affect the work experience opportunities they people have?

Firstly, some businesses/organisations will only offer work experience to local young people. For example, an MP may only offer to work experience to students in their constituency. From personal experience, I tried to obtain work experience with ‘Plan International UK’ but they said they only offer it to students in London due to the commuting time (I live in Maidstone, an hour’s train journey from London Victoria) but were willing to overlook this when I informed them I could stay with family in London. In addition, if the work experience is inaccessible by public transport because it is too expensive or there are not sufficient routes, then a young person is forced to rely on someone to drive them if they cannot drive themselves. However, this could be unobtainable for some young people.

In addition, I believe socioeconomic background influences the ability to receive work experience as from my survey, 10 out of the 27 responses said they obtained the work experience “through family/friend giving you a contact (E.g. giving you their friend's email)”, “through a family friend/friend arranging it for you (e.g. completing with your parent's friend)” or “through your family arranging it for you (e.g. completing with your parent)”. As I attend a Grammar School in a fairly affluent area, the fact that so many people found work experience not necessarily based on their own merit but with the help of family/friends, proves that socioeconomic background contributes significantly in the ease of completing work experience.

Furthermore, in October, I will be completing work experience with the UN in Geneva but I only discovered this through a friend and will have to pay £425 as well as the costs of transport and food. Clearly, for many, this would be totally unobtainable.

5. How could resources to help young people find out about and access work experience be improved?

I believe there should be a government run/ endorsed online platform where employers offer the number of placements they can take on. Then, an anonymous application should be submitted, similar to one required for a job, and then based on the application (and possibly a video-conference interview) the strongest candidate should be selected. Then, the work experience can be rated online with feedback given. If the student is receiving a 16-19 bursary fund, for example, then they should receive funding to help with travel to and from. In addition, the government should give rewards to companies who offer work experience to incentivise them to do so as it can be difficult and inconvenient to arrange. The most difficult obstacle I have faced is that places of work have no obligation to conduct work experience for under 18s and therefore do not as it becomes too much hassle. I have contacted around 50 charities, organisations or companies enquiring about work experience yet I have thus far only completed: a week in a nursery attached to the school my brother works at, 2 days with different MPs in the Houses of Parliament and 4 days with a County Councillor (all three I met originally through my work as a youth councillor and MYP and asked them personally if I could do work experience with them).

June 2018