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|  | Written evidence submitted by London Councils (BYC020) |

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|  | London Councils represents London’s 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all of its member authorities to make the case for powers, freedoms and resources to best serve the needs of London’s residents and businesses. |  |
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# Introduction

* We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee’s inquiry into the barriers to work experience. We see experience of the world of work as a crucial dimension of effective careers education that should be available to all young people irrespective of their circumstances or background. We are responding to every question posed by the Committee except its final question on devolved administrations.
* London Councils hosts the London Young People's Education and Skills Board, the only forum that brings together the organisations that have responsibility for post-16 education and skills in London. The Board provides an assessment of the needs of London that is forged not only out of the varied perspectives of its members, but through a vast body of research and analysis tested by the sector’s collective experience.
* In conjunction with the Greater London Authority and businesses partners (through the London Economic Action Partnership), we have developed London Ambitions, a careers offer for all young Londoners, as the means through which education and industry can be brought closer together, and help employers and teachers join forces in providing young people with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their future.
* We have provided a summary of London Ambitions as an appendix to this response and we will refer to specific aspects of London Ambitions throughout.
* We are asking the Committee to support our case for the government to provide resources that enable London Ambitions to grow.

# Summary

* We recommend that the Committee considers “work experience” in the context of providing effective careers advice and as an example of providing young people with experience of the world of work. London Ambitions is a partnership response in the capital to the challenge of preparing and recruiting young people into employment. Its potential impact is significant and the initiative merits dedicated resources.
* Work experience, if properly planned and supported, can raise ambitions; but, if poorly conceived and executed, can entrench inequalities.
* There is a direct link between the quality of careers advice available to young people and the quality of their experience of the world of work, including formal work experience placements. A fully-funded, dedicated Career Officer post in every school and college, with responsibility for employer engagement, would deliver the greatest impact on building relationships with businesses.
* Restoring an infrastructure of education-business links type organisations would help support businesses and coordinate employer engagement by schools and colleges.
* It will be difficult to make meaningful changes to the system of careers advice and work experience without also considering the funding of education and ensuring that institutions are fully resourced to deliver a modern curriculum that looks to the future.
* The Committee might wish to explore the circumstances that have contributed to the decline of week-end and part-time working among young people and consider what steps might be taken to redress it.

# General

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

* London Ambitions, published in 2015, is a partnership response - driven by businesses - to the challenge of preparing and recruiting young people into employment with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in their first job and develop a future career. In London Ambitions, we refer to “experience of the world of work”, rather than “work experience”. There are four main reasons why we do so:
  + - There are many ways in which young people can gain experience of the world of work in addition to a formal period of work experience and these opportunities should be both valuable and of high quality. For example, job fairs (such as Skills London and the UK WorldSkills event) offer young people an opportunity to interact first-hand with a range of employers and industries to help inform their future route into employment. In developing London Ambitions we have been careful not to downplay the importance of various insights into the world of work and we urge the Committee to consider the importance of diverse opportunities when forming its conclusions.
    - Many young people have families that are well-connected into the labour market. These families have a network of contacts who may offer both employment to their children and support in the transition from education to entering into a job for the first time and establishing a career pathway. However, many other families do not have this advantage and for them raising awareness of the full range of career options available in London is a more urgent priority. For young people with limited or no access to a work ‘network’, different types of engagement with the world of work can help them (and their families) understand better the dynamics of the labour market, test out their likes and dislikes and begin to appreciate their potential.
    - Too often, young people (and/or their families) come to regret decisions that they have made earlier in their education and find that employment and career options are closed to them later in life as a result. Earlier exposure to the world of work helps young people and their families (especially those without access to work networks) to become more aware of the short, medium and long-term developments in the labour market and to develop their knowledge of the impact these developments have on subject choices and learning routes. This form of exposure can be through, for example, career insights from industry experts, work tasters and work shadowing, as well as formal work experience. For some young people, it could prove more effective to provide a series of shorter experiences rather than a single, formal period of work experience for a set length of time, especially if these shorter experiences were punctuated by reflection and discussion with a careers guidance professional.
    - Although work experience will undoubtedly provide a great opportunity for most young people to sample the world of work before considering their next moves, we also think that policy-makers have tended to ignore the serious decline of week-end and part-time working among young people. We believe that these provide even more robust experience for young people and contribute considerably to their learning about what will be expected of them as an employee. The circumstances that have contributed to this decline and the steps that might be taken to redress it have not been investigated fully.
* In 2017, London Councils published the results of two surveys it carried out; one of businesses and the other of parents.
  + - In July 2017, London Councils published “Young People's Education and Skills Work Experience Study”[[1]](#footnote-2), which showed employers’ perspectives on offering work experience to young people. The report highlighted that the majority of business leaders were positive about the benefits of providing young people with experience of the world of work, but over half of employers believed that employers should have more involvement in education. Over a third (36 per cent) of all London’s employers offered work experience to young people aged 13 to 19, but nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) offered some kind of programme aimed at young people. More than half of all the businesses surveyed said they did not have enough support to offer work experience (this was most strongly felt among small and medium-sized enterprises).
    - In September 2017 parents were asked about their perceptions of careers advice and work experience, which produced a mixed picture[[2]](#footnote-3). While four out of 10 parents said they thought the education system prepared their children well for the world of work, three out of 10 said they did not think the system prepared their children well and a further three in 10 had no opinion on the subject (there was no significant difference between the parents of children at primary or secondary schools and/or different types of schools). However, half of parents said they were concerned that their children would not receive meaningful experiences of the world of work before they left education or training; though younger parents (aged 25 to 34) were more confident than those in older age groups. Opinion was evenly split on whether or not parents thought their knowledge of the labour market enabled them to support their children’s career choices.
* The Committee might wish to reflect that before the changes brought about through the Education Act 2011 Local Authorities were responsible for (a) supporting links between the education sector and businesses (including work experience) and (b) careers education, information, advice and guidance. When responsibilities for careers transferred to schools (in 2012) and colleges (in 2013), this was without any additional resources. While there is no denying that there were inconsistencies in the quality and availability of careers work, including work experience, before this transfer of responsibilities took place, inconsistency in both availability and quality has been exacerbated. This has been cited by a range of reports and publications by academics, business groups and representatives of young people[[3]](#footnote-4). We recommend that schools and colleges be resourced to provide a dedicated careers officer post and that a local infrastructure of education-business links should be restored.
* The ‘formula’ for good quality work experience is already known and the key features of this formula feature in many of the reports that have been published over recent years:
  + - Work experience needs to be a strategic priority for schools and colleges and their leadership. This aspect of each institution should be inspected and reported on by Ofsted;
    - Work experience has to be taken forward as a ‘whole institution’ issue, with responsibilities established at each level (i.e. governors, managers, work experience coordinators, teachers, etc.) and in conjunction with parents/carers and employers;
    - Work experience opportunities have to be planned to provide clear learning goals, whether these link to specific aspects of students’ curricula or to identified ‘employability’ goals;
    - There should be a formal review at the end of each work experience placement.
* In developing London Ambitions, we drew on a wealth of research into the benefits that work experience offers to young people and businesses. For young people, work experience can – if it is incorporated into a wider immersion into the world of work - fill an important gap in their ‘soft’ skills by interacting with people of different ages and interacting with a workplace. They gain first-hand knowledge of employer expectations and get a great chance to add to their CV and, consequently, to stand out in job applications. Experience so f work can help young people firm up their course choices and ambitions. For businesses, there are opportunities to develop potential mentors, trainers and supervisors in the existing workforce. Engaging with young people through work experience placements often brings new energy and perspective to businesses. For businesses looking to expand, maintaining relationships with schools over time can lead to creating a talent pipeline of young staff.

**How important is good quality work experience to a successful industrial strategy?**

* In addition to the benefits of work experience for young people and businesses, the OECD Skills Outlook 2015 identified measures to better integrate young people into the labour market, to reduce skills depletion and avoid the scarring effects of unemployment at the start of adulthood.
* These measures were built upon in the OECD Employment Outlook 2016, which mentions that increasing workplace skills contributes to:
  + - Greater earnings
    - Greater job satisfaction / better health
    - Higher productivity (for the firm), or output per hour for employee
* These are essential components in export-driven economic growth and are critical to strong economic and industrial strategies.
* Good quality work experience, can contribute to the Industrial Strategy by improving the characteristics of the workforce, increasing the overall competence and qualifications of the workforce; reducing unemployment and disengagement and improving productivity and competitiveness, especially in modern manufacturing industries.

**What evidence is there that work experience boosts social mobility?**

* Research in 2008[[4]](#footnote-5) found that, although work experience has the potential to make a real difference in the lives of young people, all too often work placements reflect patterns of social class inequality (in those instances where better-placed parents are able to call on their well-established networks to the exclusion of other young people, it may be seen as entrenching advantage and disadvantage).
* However the Social Mobility Commission in its State of the Nation report of 2017[[5]](#footnote-6) found that in those instances where schools have worked particularly closely with professional and specialist employers to place young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, work experience has the capacity to raise ambitions and boost social mobility.
* Our survey of parents in 2017 found that parents who were better-off were also better informed about London’s labour market than those from poorer families.

# Young people

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

* London’s economy benefits from a range of businesses from the largest household names and multinationals to very small, highly innovative, micro-businesses. It has a thriving enterprise culture and there are agglomerations of businesses that provide mutual support (for example, digital and technology in the Old Street area). This helps ensure varied work experience opportunities in many industries and helps both schools and employers attain a ‘critical mass’ of students to make work experience worthwhile. In cross-regional work with colleagues in other parts of the country, we have noted that they sometimes struggle to achieve these numbers – and this can restrict choices for young people elsewhere to the opportunities that are available rather than what best suits their needs and potential.
* As we have mentioned elsewhere in this response – and the Social Mobility Commission’s work confirms – the very top jobs in Britain, both in the Public and Private Sectors, appear to have been the preserve of an elite for several generations and access into these professions is difficult for people without the right connections.
* Although some schools and colleges have rightly celebrated examples of students who have broken through barriers into such professions, these appear to be isolated cases.

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

* London Ambitions incorporates the London Ambitions Careers Curriculum, the London Ambitions Portal and a series of Careers Clusters, all of which have proved valuable resources.
* The London Ambitions Careers Curriculum framework supports the embedding of careers, employability and enterprise programmes and activities in London schools, colleges and other local community settings. The content is designed to inspire schools and colleges to design and plan engaging careers, employability and enterprise programmes and activities for young people, parents, governors and employers.
* The London Ambitions portal[[6]](#footnote-7) brings together the many careers education opportunities provided by the capital’s businesses. Teachers can search for activities that will give their students the best opportunities to raise their aspirations and gain direct experience of the world of work.
* The portal allows schools, colleges and businesses to connect with each other, making it easier to share information and develop approaches to careers education. There are approximately 450 organisations currently registered on the portal.
* There are twelve Careers Clusters in London which have been funded by the European Social Fund. Senior leadership teams in secondary schools and further education colleges have design high quality careers opportunities that:
  + - enable students to try out different employer-based activities
    - support teachers to understand London's job opportunities
    - support pupils into work placements and internships.

# Schools and businesses

**Should compulsory work experience for under-16s be reinstated? What is the right age for work experience within compulsory education: 14-16 or 16-18?**

* We believe that all young people should be entitled to 100 hours experience of the world of work by the time they reach 16.
* Primary schools have increasingly been offering their pupils experience of the world of work and we have drawn on this experience in formulating London Ambitions.
* Work experience as a one-off block of time can be of limited value to some young people if it is isolated and not part of a comprehensive and tailored exposure to the world of work. Work experience therefore provides young people with deeper learning if it is connected with other experiences of the world of work before years 10 and 11.

**How could schools and colleges be better supported to help their students access quality work experience?**

* London Ambitions provides a framework for the provision of an equitable, high-standard careers guidance offer across London and the infrastructure to support it:
  + - * A core entitlement for all young people
      * Standards young people can expect and measure
      * A portal to support the delivery of experience of the world of work
      * Clusters of schools and colleges to share resources and information
* The funding of a dedicated Career Officer, supported by a local infrastructure committed to developing education-business links, would enable more comprehensive adoption of initiatives like London Ambitions that aim to improve the take-up and quality of careers advice.

**Are services to help schools and colleges develop relationships with businesses working well? How could they be improved?**

* Based on our discussions with senior leaders in schools and colleges, the resource that delivers the greatest impact with regard to helping schools and colleges develop relationships with businesses is a dedicated Careers Officer (a fully-funded post) with responsibility for employer engagement.
* Having a dedicated officer at school / college level enables institutions to develop local connections; work with employers to devise work experience opportunities that provide benefits for both students and employers; support teachers and tutors with schemes of work for work placement preparation and reflection following placements; and support for employers.
* It has proved very difficult for schools to employ a dedicated Careers Officer in the current funding climate – schools have faced significant funding reductions over the past few years. It is predicted that only 26 per cent of London’s schools will receive sufficient funding to meet real term cost pressures forecast by the National Audit Office for 2018/19. This funding position is exacerbated by a projected increase in demand for higher-cost places for students with special educational needs and / or disabilities. It is therefore important that schools are funded to the levels necessary to deliver a modern curriculum to all its students, including the provision of high quality careers advice and guidance.
* As more schools see the benefits of dedicated support, local coordination of activity would help manage contacts with employers at a strategic level.

**How could barriers to businesses (including small businesses) offering work experience be overcome?**

* In the survey we conducted last year approximately three in 10 employers said that they did not see any benefits to their organisation through offering work experience. The reasons given include:
* Perceived lack of suitable tasks for the types of roles in the organisation;
* The required level of supervision and management of young people;
* Their organisation does not need any of the benefits that a work experience placement might offer.
* The report made it clear that more support could be offered to employers to encourage them to offer more opportunities to young people. More than half of London employers surveyed do not think they have enough - or any - support for offering work experience opportunities to young people. Many employers also stated that they did not feel the quality of applications from young people for work experience was good enough.
* In terms of the support that could be provided, 25 per cent of employers in organisations that do not currently offer work experience said that they would be interested in information on how to set up a work experience scheme. Those already offering work experience would appreciate support in understanding how to make work experience placements more meaningful. Furthermore, organisations believed that providing financial support to businesses to offer training or employment could significantly reduce youth unemployment. One in three (33 per cent) employers said that a financial incentive would encourage them to offer more (or their first) work experience opportunities to young people aged 13 to 19. When asked unprompted what one recommendation their organisation would make to the government to halve youth unemployment by 2020, the most common response was to provide financial support to businesses offering training or employment.

**What does good practice in offering, advertising and recruiting for work experience look like, and how can businesses be encouraged to follow it?**

* Business that wish to offer work experience placements are encouraged to register on the London Ambitions Portal so that schools are able to search for suitable placements for their students. They can search according to the industrial sector in which the placement will take place; the desired occupation in which the placement will occur or the location of the placement.
* It is most urgent that the number of placement opportunities should increase and partner organisations in London are continuing to make the case for London Ambitions to be resourced. We are convinced that the application of additional resources would enable us to make significant progress in building the ‘critical mass’ of business and school registrations on the London Ambitions Portal that would establish it as a core feature of London’s education and skill system.

**Does work experience benefit businesses? What are the motivations for businesses to offer work experience?**

* In our 2017 survey,[[7]](#footnote-8) businesses identified some key benefits from offering work experience placements. For example:
* Work experience placements enable businesses to develop potential supervisors and managers by planning and overseeing placements.
* Bringing young people into the workplace can provide fresh insights into a business, its processes and its culture. In particular, many businesses that have offered work experience placements have said that they have transformed the way in which they use social media as a means of communicating with their customers.
* Offering work experience placements can raise the profile of a business among young people, their peers, their parents, teachers and school leaders/governors. A positive reputation through offering good quality work experience placements can attract a different customer base and a more varied applicant pool for vacancies, meaning that companies have a good selection of candidates with the right skills and attitude.

# Other services and organisations

**What role should the Government have in ensuring young people have access to quality work experience?**

* Although schools and colleges are autonomous entities, the government has considerable influence over them.
* It determines the amount of funding each institution receives, the number of young people who can enrol in each institution, the conditions of funding and the “flow of funds”, including specifying precisely how schools and colleges earn their funding.
* It issues statutory guidance to which institutions have to have regard; it can vary the terms of funding and grant agreements; it publishes performance information that affects the reputation of learning institutions.
* The government should therefore consider the full weight of its powers in the context of a funding settlement for education that enables institutions to deliver high quality learning experiences that a fit for the 21st Century.

**Should the Government invest in resources to help young people find work experience independently? What would these resources ideally look like?**

* This would not support policies on integration and fairness. Those who can source work experience independently are likely to be those with the best-connected families and, consequently, those least in need of public resources. Schools and colleges are obviously well-placed to help their students source appropriate experience of the world of work, but we believe local authorities could bring much needed coordination.

**How could private and third sector organisations be better supported and encouraged to help young people access quality work experience?**

* We suggest that the Committee doesn’t ignore the Public Sector, which is a major employer in London and nationally.
* Irrespective of the sector in which they operate, it has often proved to be the case that employers need help to manage relationships with the education sector. In the past, this type of support had been provided by Education-Business Links Organisations (such as Education Business Partnerships), but as the responsibilities and resources associated with work experience have changed in the last decade so has the infrastructure supporting employer engagement by schools and colleges. We suggest that the Committee should examine this gap in the system and recommend the formation of structures to support employer engagement in education delivered impartially through local authorities and that learn from, but do not replicate the structures that have existed in the past.

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**Appendix 1**

**London Ambitions**

* Every young Londoner should have access to impartial, independent and personalised careers education, information, advice and face-to-face guidance in their local community.
* Every young Londoner should have completed at least 100 hours experience of the world of work, in some form, by the time they reach the age of 16. This may include career insights from industry experts, work tasters, coaching, mentoring, enterprise activities, part-time work, participation in Skills London and The Big Bang Event, work shadowing, work experience/supported work experience and other relevant activities. Lessons from this and other elements of a young Londoners’ employability journey should be captured in a personalised digital portfolio. This will provide a strong foundation for London’s young people to take responsibility for capturing learning and experiences from an early age (and beyond the age of 16) and support their careers activities with employers.
* Every secondary school and college should have in place an explicit publicised careers policy and Careers Curriculum on young people’s experiences of the world of work, links with business, careers provision and destination outcomes. That policy should be reviewed and approved by the governing body at least every three years. All schools and colleges should also report annually on delivery of the careers policy and curriculum.
* Every good institution will have a governor with oversight for ensuring the organisation supports all students to relate their learning to careers and the world of work from an early age.
* Every secondary school and college should have up-to-date, user-friendly labour market intelligence/information (LMI) readily accessible by young people, teachers and parents/carers drawing upon the Skills London Match, UKCES ‘LMI for All’, National Careers Service local LMI data and other reliable sources of information.
* The quality of careers provision should be strengthened by developing ‘careers clusters’ to share resources in improving awareness of London’s labour market and supporting school and college leaders in a whole-school approach to plan and deliver careers provision.
* The London Ambitions Portal should enable more schools and colleges to easily find high-quality careers provision designed to support the career development of all young Londoners.

<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/download/file/fid/15754>

1. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/32128> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/education-and-school-places/ask-parents-fifth-year> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The position is summarised in the briefing produced in January 2018 by the House of Commons Library: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7236/CBP-7236.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/177818.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://londonambitionsportal.london.gov.uk/join> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/32128> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)