Written evidence submitted by Plymouth City Council (BYC026)

**1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1 Work experience is vitally important in giving young people first-hand experience of the work place and providing them with an opportunity to start thinking about the attributes, skills and knowledge they need to succeed in later life. As outlined in the Gatsby research for good career guidance, experience of work places / work experience should form part of a comprehensive strategy for careers in a school / college which is underpinned by the 8 benchmarks. It cannot be delivered in isolation. The Government has put the Careers and Enterprise Company[[1]](#footnote-1) (CEC) at the heart of driving forward careers provision for young people (underpinned by the Gatsby benchmarks) and managing the allocation of a significant amount of funding towards this endeavour. It is suggested that government should review the impact of the CEC along with wider careers related programmes, and the investment in these, in order to establish how current resources could best be utilised to address the challenges identified with the delivery of careers and more specifically work experience.

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

2.1 Work-related learning (including work experience) works best when young people, their parents or carers, schools, colleges, employers, work-based learning providers and Education Business Partnership Organisations (where they still exist) work together to make it happen.

2.2 The CBI report Time well spent[[2]](#footnote-2) provides a comprehensive analysis of the key aspects of good quality work experience. Including:

* Enhancing student employability
* A 3 way partnership amongst student, school and employer to get the most out of placements
* Employer vision for successful placements, objectives, tasks and activities that embed competencies
* Student review and for schools to reinforce the lessons learnt from work experience.

2.3 The OCR[[3]](#footnote-3) has also produced a report that outlines best practice in work experience to ensure good quality experiences for young people and employers.

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

3.1 As the workforce of the future, preparing young people for the world of work is vital to a successful industrial strategy. Work experience has a key role to play within this, giving young people first-hand experience of the work place and providing them with an opportunity to start thinking about the attributes, skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

3.2 A survey carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce[[4]](#footnote-4) suggested that work experience should be offered to all school children under the age of 16 to help young people make informed decisions about their future careers, address skills gaps within our economy and prevent youth unemployment.

3.3 As outlined in the Gatsby report for Good Careers Guidance[[5]](#footnote-5) young people need to have experience of workplaces as part of a number of other key things identified within their 8 benchmarks. These experiences need to be provided consistently and well to have the greatest impact.

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

4.1 The findings from a research report into work experience placements and social inequality[[6]](#footnote-6) generally supported the view that the lower the socio economic status of the school, the greater the likelihood of students being placed in work experience roles that reproduce patterns of social inequality. Social class is found to play a large role in these overall patterns.

4.2 Work experience is now increasingly essential to securing both university places and graduate jobs, with a 2016 report suggesting employers expect to fill anywhere between a third and half of graduate vacancies with a student who has had previous work experience at their organisation[[7]](#footnote-7).

4.3 The UKCES report Catch 16 – 24[[8]](#footnote-8) shows that some young people remain caught in a Catch-22 situation when it comes to getting on in today’s labour market; finding it difficult to get work without experience and difficult to obtain experience without work. Who you know and where you live have a big impact on the opportunities available.

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

5.1 As outlined in the Gatsby research for good career guidance, experience of work places / work experience should form part of a comprehensive strategy for careers in a school which is underpinned by the 8 benchmarks. It cannot be delivered in isolation.

5.2The Government has put the Careers and Enterprise Company[[9]](#footnote-9) (CEC) at the heart of driving forward careers provision for young people (underpinned by the Gatsby benchmarks) and managing the allocation of a significant amount of funding towards this endeavour.

5.3 However Education Business Partnerships[[10]](#footnote-10) (EBP) have been in existence for many years and have been designing and delivering engaging and successful ways for employers and young people to come together including supporting the delivery of work experience. EBP’s now have to contract with schools or tender for funding streams to continue this work. This includes bidding for funding to the CEC. This creates an unnecessary and costly layer.

5.4 The CEC also use a standard / generic model for their programmes e.g. the Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN) which does not necessarily meet or respond to local schools or employer’s needs. In some instances their approach to allocating funds contributes to the problem of layering up initiatives, creating a confusing and incoherent careers landscape, rather than improving this picture and addressing the real needs within the system. Furthermore, the EAN (the CEC’s flagship programme) currently only involves some schools. Whilst it is the government’s intention as part of the national careers strategy for all schools to be part of the network by 2020, there is a gap in support for those schools the network does not currently extend to. In Plymouth for instance, only 41% of schools are included within the network. Programmes such as the Inspiration agenda, providing employer / school brokerage support and delivered as part of the National Careers Service (NCS) contract extends to all schools. This enables support for those schools the EAN does not extend to. The Inspiration agenda within NCS prime provider contracts will no longer be funded beyond September 2018.

5.5 The EAN also relies on local areas to match fund the CEC investment for this programme by 50 per cent for an Enterprise Coordinator post. This has a bearing on school / college coverage as establishing local match as per requirements of the CEC model can prove challenging in the current climate. Should there be greater flexibility of the model with funding aligned to outcomes rather than outputs and a move away from a one size fits all approach, local investment may be easier to secure.

5.6 As such, government funding for careers provision would be better devolved to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) , Local Authorities (LAs) or schools / colleges themselves (ring fenced for the purpose of careers provision) to address local need / challenges. Plymouth as an example is fortunate to have a strong network of Careers Coordinators across the city with a history of supporting one another. The CEC approach to funding however, which leads to some schools benefitting and some that do not is potentially divisive to this partnership. Government should review the impact and cost effectiveness of the CEC and its programmes with feedback from employers, schools, colleges and alternative provision across the country as part of this consultation. Any devolved funding to institutions for this purpose should protect impartiality with robust challenge through bodies such as the Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted inspection for schools & colleges.

5.7 Government should also consider wider programmes they fund which require employer engagement e.g. STEM Learning / STEM Ambassadors, Tomorrows Engineers, Networks for Collaborative Outreach (HEFCE), Job Centre Plus Outreach in Schools, Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network, and Industrial Cadets etc. and how the interface with employers can be better coordinated. The various programmes can create confusion amongst employers which will hamper their ability to take part and or offer work experience / WRL opportunities for young people.

5.8 EBPs used to work with employers to generate new work experience opportunities, enhance the quality of these placements and make it easy for employers to engage. Due to the way they are currently funded, this work is no longer possible unless alternative resources through tendering are secured or a different approach is taken as outlined above.

5.9 The statutory careers guidance[[11]](#footnote-11) published in January 2018 for education providers is based on the Gatsby benchmarks, with work experience featuring as benchmark 6 as set out below. The guidance is open to interpretation by schools & colleges. Experience of a work place through a one off visit to an employer is quite different to a block or extended period of work experience.

*6.0 Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing* ***and/or*** *work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.*

* *By the age of 16, every pupil should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.*
* *By the age of 18, every pupil should have had one further such experience, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.*

6. 1 The Gatsby guidance is also open to interpretation for colleges however, work experience features more significantly within the Ofsted further education and skills inspection handbook[[12]](#footnote-12).

6.2 Government should make block and /or extended work experience a statutory requirement as part of 11 – 16 education in addition to maintaining requirements and rigour set out within the Ofsted School and Further education & skills inspection handbooks for work experience provision post 16.

6.3 The school inspection handbook[[13]](#footnote-13) for some time has stated that inspectors will consider how well

*‘learners receive high quality impartial careers guidance that prepares them for their chosen next steps and enables them to make well-informed decisions about their future plans’.*

6.4 However feedback has suggested that there is an inconsistent approach to inspecting careers provision in schools. Government should ensure that there is greater consistency and rigour in relation to inspection of careers by Ofsted.

6.5 Consideration also needs to be given to those areas that are characterised by a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) economic landscape and how support can be provided. Research[[14]](#footnote-14) has shown that the main barrier to engagement for SME’s in the provision of work experience and Apprenticeships are time constraints and the lack of availability of staff to work with learners and apprentices. These barriers make it challenging for providers to find work experience places and apprenticeships. This increases the challenge of finding work experience and employment opportunities for vulnerable young people and / or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who may need additional support in the work place.

6.6 Research[[15]](#footnote-15) commissioned by Cornwall Council into what works when supporting young people with learning difficulties (LD) identified that employers need educating and training about the potential of people with a disability as part of an effective workforce as a key dependency of successful models of pathways to employment for young people with LD.

6.7 The BASE supported employment model[[16]](#footnote-16) shows that employers need close engagement to help tem overcome traditional recruitment and selection barriers. Supported Employment has been successfully used as a personalised model for supporting people with significant disabilities to secure and retain paid employment.

6.8 The BASE model outlines key elements that need addressing to enable successful and sustainable employment. However, supported employment and access to charitable services are variable dependent on post code. Furthermore resources to support young people with SEND into work are disjointed and allocated through various initiatives / programmes with varying funding rules and regulations (DWP Access to Work, DWP Disability Confidence, CEC High Needs Fund, LA Supported Internship Funding, Apprenticeship Funding etc.) which make shaping services for this cohort at a local level challenging and result in inefficiencies.

6.9 For the individuals and schools, reports[[17]](#footnote-17) suggest that work experience for young people with SEND is a significant issue, with many young people missing out. Key barriers identified by research [[18]](#footnote-18) include:

* identifying an appropriate/ accessible sector and occupation
* Issues with student take up due to ‘Lack of confidence’, ‘Fear of the unknown’ and ‘Not being work ready’.

7.0 As outlined by the Preparing for Adulthood Pathway into Employment[[19]](#footnote-19) and BASE model, these issues cannot be addressed in isolation and service design to support young people with SEND into employment, of which work experience is a critical part, need to address key dependencies for the young person, family, employer and the key organisations as part of the system that support young people along this pathway.

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

8.1This will be increasingly important if work experience continues not to be a statutory duty of 11 – 16 education. This approach could potentially be beneficial, however would suggest considering the feedback highlighted above regarding multiple layers of careers related initiatives provided by different organisations leading to confusion amongst employers / disengagement.

8.2 Employer databases are also often seen as individual organisations commercial property (especially if they are competing in the market place e.g. provision of work experience health and safety checks) which prevents the sharing of information which would help improve awareness of work experience opportunities and the ability of young people to seek opportunities independently.

8.3 Any investment from the government would be well placed in institutions: schools, colleges and alternative provision to provide key liaison with employers. This could be achieved by redirecting / building in local flexibility of the current CEC EAN investment and wider funding streams. Government should consider how any investment in existing or new resources strengthen the emphasis on the value of soft skills and character development through work experience opportunities alongside technical acquisition.

8.4 Impartial, timely, accessible and accurate Labour Market Information (LMI) resources that demonstrate a thorough understanding of industry sectors and link to work experience opportunities in a local area could be of significant benefit. In some instances industry guidance is misaligned, in the creative sector for example to contemporary industry. Neither do some existing LMI resources reflect local or regional trends but are based on a national picture. Ensuring those individuals who are providing personal guidance to young people in a local area have appropriate CPD in accurate LMI is also crucial.

8.5 Advice and guidance would need to be made available to young people and parents to ensure health and safety and safeguarding needs are addressed.

8.6 It would be important to consider how additional support would be provided to young people and families in vulnerable groups who may lack the confidence, contacts, understanding of labour market etc. to source work experience independently. As highlighted in the research above social class is seen to play a role in patterns of work experience. A research report by the Education and Employers Taskforce and CIPD[[20]](#footnote-20) demonstrated that half of placements are found by young people or by their families using largely existing social networks.

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

9.1 In light of the resource and time constraints experienced by the private sector, the provision of work experience opportunities needs to be made as simple as possible. Improving information available to employers via Growth Hubs[[21]](#footnote-21) as single points of advice for business support could be of benefit.

9.2 EBP’s have provided a range of support to employers to develop work experience opportunities. Examples include the Platinum Provider Award for work experience placements in Cornwall[[22]](#footnote-22) which enables businesses to plan and quality assure their work experience more effectively. These models could be better supported through government funding via the CEC with a subsidised cost structure based on employer size. Could there be any flexibility in Apprenticeship levy funding for instance to provide incentives for employers to offer work experience and use levy funding to buy in this type of support from EBPs. Levy funding could also be used more flexible to support increasing the diversity of their workforce / fund supported employment services for young people with SEND. Other incentives for employers to offer work experience could potentially include a small business rate relief.

**10.0 What lessons can be learned from the approaches of the devolved administrations and other countries to work experience?**

10.1 Cornwall Council reflected improved careers provision with their devolution deal as set out below[[23]](#footnote-23). This provided some traction with the CEC to lever in additional resource and deliver a more tailored approach to the Enterprise Adviser Network in Cornwall, that better responds to need of the local area.

*10.2 Building on the existing local Enterprise Adviser Pilot, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership and other local partners will work jointly with the new Careers and Enterprise Company to coordinate employer-education activity more effectively.*

10.3 The Gatsby report[[24]](#footnote-24) undertook international research into good practice across its benchmarks. For work experience and work related learning there are a number of examples including:

* Ireland – preparation for life transition year at 16/17 including work experience
* Finland – vocational education placement system.

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1. https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/time-well-spent-cbi.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/168852-the-ocr-guide-to-best-practice-in-work-experience.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.citb.co.uk/news-events/uk/work-experience-key-to-plugging-skills-gaps/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/the-work-experience-placements-of-secondary-school-students-widening-horizons-or-reproducing-social-inequality-january-2008/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.socialmobility.org.uk/2017/04/one-1-work-experience-campaign/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/404997/15.02.18.\_Youth\_report\_V17.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.ebpnational.org.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/672418/\_Careers\_guidance\_and\_access\_for\_education\_and\_training\_providers.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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15. <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/27944062/send-research-project-a-summary-of-what-works.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. https://www.base-uk.org/what-supported-employment [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. https://schoolsweek.co.uk/nearly-half-of-schools-fail-to-offer-work-experience-to-send-pupils/ [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. <http://www.specialworld.net/2017/04/03/schools-struggling-to-offer-work-experience-placements-to-students-with-send/> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. http://www.gettingalife.org.uk/resources.html [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. https://www.careersadviceforparents.org/2015/01/work-experience-whats-going-wrong.html [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. https://www.lepnetwork.net/resources/ [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/education-business-partnership-ebp/work-experience-placements/the-platinum-providers-award-for-placement-providers/ [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/447419/20150715\_Cornwall\_Devolution\_Deal\_-\_FINAL\_-\_reformatted.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. http://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/assets/file?filePath=\_\_/home/7267-gatsby-a4-benchmarks-handbook-pages-aw-digi-spreads.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-24)