

Realising the potential of work experience

British Youth Council

Youth Select Committee 2018

Realising the potential of work experience



Introduction from Mr Speaker

I'm delighted to introduce the seventh Youth Select Committee report on work experience, produced by the British Youth Council with the support of the House of Commons.

Good quality work experience brings the world of work to life, and helps young people decide what sort of job they might want to do – or not to do - in the future. It generates interest in industries which face skills' shortages but are critical to UK competitiveness, such as in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) sector. It also prepares students for the demands of the workplace and enhances their employment prospects.

The reports of the Youth Select Committee are rightly recognised for their in-depth analysis and unique understanding of the issues they investigate. I hope that my Parliamentary colleagues will take on board the conclusions of this report, and I am certain that it will, more widely, provide an invaluable contribution to the discussions surrounding this highly important subject.

Mr Speaker, Rt Hon John Bercow

The Youth Select Committee

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Libby McEnhill (Clerk), Mariam Keating (Assistant Inquiry Manager), Francesca Danmole (Senior Policy and Campaigns Officer, British Youth Council), Rhammel Afflick (Communications and Media Officer, British Youth Council), Siobhan Conway (Project Management) and Paul Connolly (Media Officer)

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the British Youth Council:

<http://www.byc.org.uk/uk/youth-select-committee>

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Summary

Work experience matters: to young people, businesses, and the wider economy. But young people's early experiences of work are, all too often, marked by inequalities. Who you are, where you live, and where you are educated influences the type and quality of work experience you are able to access.

We welcome recent steps taken by the Department for Education (DfE/the Department) to address the patchy, unequal nature of young people's access to work experience. Since January 2018 schools and colleges in England have been required to use the Gatsby Benchmarks—markers of excellence in careers support—to design and structure their careers provision. The Department has tasked the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) with helping schools meet the Benchmarks. Both the Benchmarks and CEC show potential. But previous attempts to drive up quality and consistency of provision have not resulted in high quality support becoming available for all young people. The Department must ensure the CEC does not replicate the mistakes of the past. Given the substantial public money invested in it, DfE should instruct Ofsted to inspect the quality of CEC funded provision, as it used to do for the National Careers Service. It should also commission a full, independent review of the CEC's impact on access to work experience for the most disadvantaged young people.

The Benchmarks replace the previous obligation on schools to offer all students two weeks of compulsory “work-related activity”—usually interpreted as a placement—at age 14 to 16. Instead, schools design their own programmes of activities in line with the Benchmarks. We welcome the Department's recognition that work experience should mean more than just a one-off placement. The decision to move from “one size fits all” to a more flexible model was the right one.

The Department must ensure, however, that its flexible approach does not breed or perpetuate inequalities. Even with the Benchmarks as a framework, there is a risk that substantive opportunities such as placements will continue to go to more privileged students. The Department should update guidance to schools to include a “right to be offered” a substantive work placement at 14–16. It should also track, and publish, data on the activities that students fulfil in respect of the work experience-related Benchmarks with reference to characteristics such as geographic location, disability, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic background. The Department should use this to produce an annual “health check” on young peoples' parity of access to work experience.

Young people want their work experience to be meaningful: whether broadening their understanding of jobs available, gaining transferrable skills, or allowing them to demonstrate “real work” skills to prospective employers. The quality of individual placements and encounters matters. Government should work with schools, business and young people to develop a quality benchmarking scheme for businesses offering work experience. It should lead by example by ensuring all central Departments sign up, and publishing an annual report on their progress against the benchmarks. The Department could also do more to guide young people in preparing for and reflecting on placements: something we heard is essential to getting the most from work experience.

In 2016–17 DfE withdrew funding from CEC for just such an initiative: the “Enterprise Passport”. This decision is regrettable. The Department should reinstate funding for development of the Passport.

Young people in England lack the Government-backed online provision for careers guidance that is available in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The redesign of the National Careers Service website offered a clear chance to address this gap. But the Department has chosen not to include work experience in the redesigned site. This is a missed opportunity. The Department should revisit its decision, dedicating a section of the National Careers Service website to work experience. It should work with young people to co-produce this resource and involve them as ambassadors in promoting the site on an ongoing basis once it is launched.

Work experience does not just benefit individual young people. It could also help future-proof the UK’s economy. The UK faces skills shortages in STEM industries; shortages which are only likely to be exacerbated by Brexit. Work experience can help to generate interest amongst young people in these careers. In turn, this helps ensure businesses have access to the best potential recruits. The Department has ambitious plans for its vocational courses, including the new “T Level” qualification from 2020. But the success of these plans depends on demand from young people for technical education. A lack of access to work experience could stymie this demand. The Department should conduct research on the links between work experience and choosing technical education at 16+, with a view to diverting some funding into schools to support work experience provision. More immediately, the Department should extend its existing travel bursary scheme to under 16s, ensuring that the cost of travelling to a placement does not present a barrier to less advantaged young people taking part.

The Department for Business, Education and Industrial Strategy’s (BEIS) decision not to provide evidence to our inquiry did nothing to reassure us that there is cross-Departmental agreement on the importance of work experience to the future economy. DfE and BEIS must work more closely together to help businesses understand the importance of offering work experience, give practical support to do so, and encourage and support young people into placements. The creation of a joint stakeholder group, including representatives from business, education, and young people themselves would introduce some much-needed strategic direction. Its purpose should be to consider how businesses in key sectors that do not currently offer work experience can be encouraged and supported to do so.

Work experience already provides some young people with valuable insights and opportunities in the world of work. Many businesses and industries recognise the value that offering placements can provide. Government has made some steps forward, but there is so much more to do. We urge Government to maintain and capitalise on the momentum it has created, moving forward towards fully realising the potential of work experience for all young people.

1 Introduction

1. Work experience matters: to young people, to businesses and to the wider economy. It offers young people practical experience of employment, helping them to make good career choices and to understand what they want to do.¹ Employers place a premium on their new recruits having relevant experience of the workplace. 65% of businesses surveyed by the Department for Education (DfE/the Department) reported that experience was a critical or significant factor in their recruitment decisions: more than said the same for academic qualifications.² The Government, too, recognises the vital role that work experience can play in boosting prosperity and ensuring the UK develops in its young people the skills that will contribute to building a prosperous economy for years to come.³ Yet all too often, young peoples' access to good quality work experience has been patchy and marked by social, economic and geographic inequalities.

Our inquiry

2. The British Youth Council's annual Make Your Mark ballot allows young people from across the UK to vote on the issues that the UK Youth Parliament will debate and campaign on in the following year. Almost one million young people took part in the 2017 ballot. Work experience emerged as one of the top ten issues, garnering over 120,000 votes. As a topic that the Youth Select Committee had not yet considered, it was referred to us to form the basis of this inquiry.

3. The 2018 Youth Select Committee is composed of eleven members, aged 16–18, from all regions of the UK. Our members included Members of the UK Youth Parliament, youth councillors, a representative from each of the devolved nations and seats reserved for groups who might otherwise be under-represented. In carrying out the inquiry and agreeing this report, we attempted to bring the diversity of our experience to bear on the extensive evidence that we received.

4. We collected evidence for this inquiry via several channels. In May 2018 we issued a call for written evidence. We received over 50 submissions, including from organisations and individuals connected to Government, academia, education, business, the voluntary sector and, not least, from young people themselves.⁴ We heard two full day oral evidence sessions on 6 and 13 July 2018 comprising eight panels and 26 witnesses, reflecting the diversity of written evidence we received.⁵ Also in July 2018 Committee members and staff visited Transport for London to meet some of their work experience students first hand and to hear about their experiences. The Houses of Parliament Education Service also carried out polling for us with visiting school groups during June and July 2018.⁶ We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to our work.

1 See, for example, A. Mann, E. Kashefpackdel and J. Rehill, [Indicators of successful transitions: teenage attitudes and experiences related to the world of work](#), Education and Employers, October 2017

2 J. Shury, D. Vivian, G. Kik, A. Skone James, M. Tweddle, H. Wrathall and N. Morrice, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), Department for Education, June 2017, p.13

3 Department for Education, [Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education](#), Cm 9541, December 2017; HM Government, [Industrial strategy: building a Britain fit for the future](#), 2017

4 [Written evidence submitted to the Youth Select Committee](#), October 2018

5 [Oral evidence to the Youth Select Committee](#), October 2018

6 House of Commons Education Centre ([BYC056](#))

Our report and policy context

5. Responsibility for ensuring young people have access to good quality work experience lies primarily with the Department for Education in England. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) also shares some responsibility in relation to skills and industrial strategy. Education is devolved to the Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh administrations, and we have considered how and what England might learn from experiences in those (and other) nations. Work experience is a large and multifaceted topic. Our report focuses largely on those elements that relate directly to young peoples' experiences and fall under DfE's responsibility (Chapters 2 and 3). We do, however, consider where work experience sits in the wider economic context in Chapter 4. In the text our conclusions are set out in **bold** and our recommendations, to which we expect a Government response, are in ***bold italic***.

2 Young people's experiences

6. Young people access work experience in a variety of different ways, at different ages. Formal responsibility for facilitating young people's access to work experience in England falls to schools and colleges. Local authority-maintained schools, further education and sixth form colleges are required to offer independent careers advice and support to their students.⁷ This may include advising on or helping students to find work experience placements.⁸ Schools may use different partners to provide careers advice, such as qualified careers staff, local or national providers or brokers, and employers. Beyond this, young people also access placements independently, via external providers, and friend and family networks. We heard that young peoples' access to work experience—and ability to make the most of their experiences—varies widely according to factors such as geographic location, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, school and gender.⁹

7. Up to 2012, schools and colleges were obliged to ensure that all students undertook “work-related learning” (usually interpreted as work experience placements) at Key Stage 4 (aged 14–16). This obligation was removed in 2012, as recommended in the Wolf Review of Vocational Education.¹⁰ The Wolf Review also recommended that the Department for Education should consider how older students, aged 16–19, could be better provided with meaningful work experience. This would include those on academic pathways, such as A-levels, as well as young people on vocational pathways such as apprenticeships which must contain a practical element. In August 2013, implementing the Wolf Review, DfE introduced a requirement for all 16–19 study programmes to include work experience.¹¹

Who participates in work experience?

8. The changes introduced since 2012 were intended to ensure that young people received more consistent access to high quality work experience and careers support. There is substantial evidence, however, that young peoples' access to work experience continues to vary—both within and between schools. The Education Select Committee reported in 2013 that there had been “a worrying deterioration in the overall level of provision for young people” with respect to work experience and careers provision.¹² A subsequent report by the Education and BEIS Committees in 2016 noted little improvement. The Committees were “very disappointed that careers advice and guidance is so poor in many schools”.¹³ Ofsted, the schools inspectorate, further described “limited” chances for children “to take part in meaningful work-related learning or work experience” at Key Stage 4.¹⁴ This

7 Department for Education, [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff](#), October 2018

8 We discuss the obligations on schools to enable access to work experience specifically in Chapter 3.

9 See, for example: Sutton Trust ([BYC011](#)), Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer ([BYC007](#)), Business in the Community ([BYC018](#)), My AFK ([BYC021](#))

10 A. Wolf, [Review of vocational education](#), March 2011. We discuss the reasons for the change further in Chapter 3.

11 Department for Education, [The Wolf Report: recommendations final progress report](#), February 2015 p.19

12 Education Committee, [Careers guidance for young people: the impact of the new duty on schools](#), Seventh report of Session 2012–13, HC 362-I, January 2013, p.3

13 Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy, [Careers education, information advice and guidance](#), First joint report of the Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees of Session 2016–17, HC 205, p.8

14 Ofsted, [Getting ready for work](#), November 2016, p.4

reflected the view of the former Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, who told a House of Lords Committee in 2016 that “the honest truth is [. . .] there has never been a golden age of careers advice”.¹⁵

9. Witnesses told us that there is an association between young peoples’ personal, social and economic characteristics, and the likelihood of them accessing good quality work experience. The school or college a young person attends can be an important factor; but access to work experience varies not just between, but within schools.¹⁶ We heard:

- Young people from poorer backgrounds often find they have fewer opportunities than their better off peers.¹⁷ Young people from higher socioeconomic grades are more likely to be satisfied with their work experience opportunities than those from lower grades. They are also more likely to report that they feel confident in their ability to access good quality work experience.¹⁸
- Black and minority ethnic (BAME) young people report lower satisfaction than white young people with the careers advice they receive and the opportunities they can access.¹⁹
- Disabled young people frequently struggle to access work experience.²⁰ Witnesses told us that this is often less a reflection of their ability or capacity to undertake such experiences, and more a lack of expectation on behalf of educators and employer and an unwillingness or lack of understanding of how to make adjustments that could enable them to take placements up.²¹
- Access to placements can reflect gender stereotypes: for example, with fewer girls and young women opting for, or receiving advice on, placements in male-dominated STEM (science, technology, engineering and manufacturing) industries;²²
- The geographic availability of placements also plays a part. Young people who live rurally may struggle to find suitable placements locally, for example, and can find that the cost of travel to those further away is prohibitive.²³

10. The young people that we heard from confirmed the evidence we heard about broader trends in accessing work experience. Beatrice Cerkez, a young person from London, told us about the two work experience placements she had undertaken in the House of Commons. She emphasised that her ability to undertake those placements was “seriously impacted by location” and having been “lucky enough to go to a school that is local and

15 House of Lords select committee on social mobility, [Overlooked and left behind: improving the transition from school to work for the majority of young people](#), HL 120, para. 128

16 L. Archer and J. Moote, [ASPIRES 2 Project spotlight: year 11 students’ views of careers education and work experience](#), February 2016

17 The Sutton Trust ([BYC011](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)), London Councils ([BYC020](#)), vInspired ([BYC043](#)), Inspire! ([BYC041](#))

18 L. Archer and J. Moote, [ASPIRES 2 Project spotlight: year 11 students’ views of careers education and work experience](#), February 2016

19 Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer ([BYC007](#)). See also Elevation Networks ([BYC0035](#))

20 RSBC ([BYC013](#)), My AFK ([BYC021](#)), Young Person’s Network ([BYC002](#)), Ambitious About Autism ([BYC022](#))

21 My AFK ([BYC021](#))

22 Department for Education ([BYC032](#)), Elevation Networks ([BYC035](#)), Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer ([BYC007](#)), [Q263 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#), [Q271 \(Bhavina Bharkhada, Steve Radley\)](#)

23 Department for Education ([BYC032](#)), [Q167 \(Dr Julie Moote\)](#), Sutton Trust ([BYC011](#))

has connections”.²⁴ She reflected that “a certain type of person tends to get picked” for work experience.²⁵ Bethanie Mortenson, a young person from Greater Manchester, told us that she was “the only person in [her] year who had work experience”, and that was only because her citizenship teacher happened to have connections to the sector she wanted to work in.²⁶ We also heard from Tom Hawkins, a student at Foxes Academy, which offers specialist training for young people with learning disabilities. He told us that he had been keen to undertake work experience and had benefited from the specialist support he received.²⁷ However, as Cameron Wood, a young disabled person, told us: it is “not the easiest of tasks” for most young disabled people to find and access placements.²⁸ Hounslow Youth Council further commented that, with growing competition for “aspirational” placements in fields such as law, media and politics in particular, access becomes “more exclusive” and based on “who you know [...] disproportionately affecting Black and Minority Ethnic students”.²⁹

11. The Sutton Trust, a charity that seeks to promote social mobility, told us that good quality work experience can be a “useful lever for improving social mobility”.³⁰ However, Professor Louise Archer and Dr Julie Moote, academics at University College London, explained that disparities in access can work against this. They told us that the students who could benefit most from high quality support (those from disadvantaged and under-served communities) receive less, and poorer quality, provision.³¹ This can then affect young peoples’ ability to move smoothly from education to employment. Research by Education and Employers, a charity and research organisation, found that young people who had higher levels of contact with employers while at school felt better prepared for work. Higher levels of engagement were also associated with better economic outcomes in later life, including wage premiums.³² Dr Deirdre Hughes, former Chair of the UK Council for Employment and Skills (UKCES), agreed. She told us a lack of access to good quality work experience while still in education can have a scarring effect on young peoples’ later careers. She explained that “the international evidence tells us that the teenage experience of work is connected with improved economic outcomes in the long term”.³³ With young people engaging less in paid, part-time work, it is important that work experience is there to bridge the gap.

12. Work experience can be a helpful lever for improving social mobility. It can also offer vital protection against the risks of unemployment in later life. But access to work experience opportunities is unequal. Who you are, where you live, and where you are educated influences the quality, type and variety of work experience you are likely to access. Successive reforms to career guidance and work experience provision in schools have done little to redress the balance.

24 [Q10 \(Beatrice Cerkez\)](#). See also Elena Ewence ([BYC015](#)), Westminster City Council/Westminster Youth Council ([BYC031](#)), Staffordshire Youth Union ([BYC037](#)), Hounslow Youth Council ([BYC008](#))

25 [Q31 \(Beatrice Cerkez\)](#)

26 [Q31 \(Bethanie Mortenson\)](#)

27 [Q9 \(Tom Hawkins\)](#)

28 Cameron Wood ([BYC001](#))

29 Hounslow Youth Council ([BYC008](#))

30 Sutton Trust ([BYC011](#))

31 Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer ([BYC007](#))

32 A. Mann, E. Kshefpakdel, J. Rehill and P. Huddleston, [Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college](#), Education and Employers, January 2016

33 [Q257 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#). See also UKCES, [The death of the Saturday job](#), 2015

Getting the most from work experience

13. Young people, schools and colleges and business frequently equate “work experience” with a placement on site with an employer.³⁴ We heard, however, that this does not reflect the full range of ways that young people can gain skills, experience and understanding of workplaces and the options available to them.³⁵ It can also act as barrier to businesses working with young people.³⁶ Business in the Community, a charity that promotes responsible business, explained that it is therefore important that “businesses, young people and schools recognise that work experience [...] should not be limited to the traditional week or two week within a business”.³⁷ The Edge Foundation, an education charity, suggested adopting a broad definition: “from ‘work experience’ in the traditional sense to ‘experience of work’ in the widest sense”. “Experience of work” or “work experiences” might include:³⁸

- A traditional, on-site placement;
- Remote models: for example, we heard about employers offering young people business-related projects, tasks or competitions to complete and receive feedback on (see Box 1, Transport for London’s [TfL] “Innovate” programme.);³⁹
- Visits to a workplace, or talks from an employer in school;⁴⁰ or
- Participation in volunteering or social action. vInspired, a social action charity, told us that their programmes help young people develop skills and attributes that are attractive to employers, and should be considered complementary to “traditional” work experience.⁴¹ The value of these programmes in terms of work experience and developing employability skills was echoed by several of the young people we heard from.⁴²

Box 1: TfL Innovate

Transport for London offers a range of placement and work experience options. In addition to more traditional models, they also run the TfL Innovate programme. TfL Innovate is aimed at students in Year 12 and 13. With support from their schools and colleges and from TfL, students work in groups to design a solution to a real TfL business challenge, with the best teams invited to pitch their idea to senior TfL staff, stakeholders and suppliers. In doing so they have an opportunity to develop and demonstrate skills that employers want. The winning team receive places on TfL’s formal work experience programmes.

Source: Committee visit to TfL

34 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), Business in the Community ([BYC018](#))

35 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), Business in the Community ([BYC018](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), The Edge Foundation ([BYC005](#)), [Q135](#) (Katy Hampshire), [Q179](#) (Anna Howard), [Q277](#) (Ashley Hodges)

36 We return to this in Chapter 4.

37 Business in the Community ([BYC018](#))

38 The Edge Foundation ([BYC005](#))

39 Transport for London ([BYC054](#)), The Edge Foundation ([BYC005](#)), [Q284–285](#) (Ashley Hodges)

40 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#))

41 vInspired ([BYC043](#)). See also Step up to Serve ([BYC019](#))

42 [Q13–14](#) (Bethanie Mortenson, Taiwo Afolabi)

14. The Department told us it agreed with this approach to defining work experience. They emphasised that the best quality work experience is “part of a structured programme of work-related activities”.⁴³ This may include wider careers education, job search and application skills, employer talks and employer-led projects. Similarly, the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)—the organisation established by Government in 2015 to take responsibility for coordinating careers providers, schools and businesses—told us that it is helpful to think of work experience as all of the ways that young people can “acquire knowledge and understanding of careers options and skills via contact with employers”. They suggested this reflects the broader principle that careers provision “works best for pupils, schools and employers when the approach is flexible.”⁴⁴

15. Witnesses emphasised, however, that it is important that young people have access to the whole range of work experiences—rather than being restricted to one or two types. This is because different types and approaches serve different purposes.⁴⁵ We heard, for example, that contact with a range of employers, perhaps via talks or short visits, was important in helping young people understand the range of opportunities available to them in different sectors, and how to access them. However, when it comes to acquiring and being able to demonstrate skills and experience that employers value, placements and longer-term engagements are critical.⁴⁶ If young people miss out on one or another type this may limit the benefits that they are able to derive from provision. Accepting a broad definition of work experience should not, therefore, slip into an acceptance of tiered provision, where some young people access a full range of experiences and others have to make do with more limited forms.⁴⁷

16. “Work experience” is not just about work placements. We commend the Department for Education for recognising the importance of young people gaining a range of experiences of work, fulfilling different purposes and individual needs. It is vital, however, that young people have access to the full range of these experiences if they are to derive the full benefits of work experience: from understanding the opportunities on offer to developing the skills and experience that employers want.

17. Witnesses overwhelmingly told us that an emphasis on good quality, in addition to quantity and range of work experiences is vital.⁴⁸ We heard a variety of perspectives on what “good quality” looks like, especially in relation to placements. Westminster Youth Council were keen for work experience to “give a true picture of work [. . .] it should not be an unrealistic display for a few days of artificially glamorous work”. But, they continued, nor should it “only be the menial tasks which current adult employees do not want to do, (e.g. making tea or photocopying)”.⁴⁹ Young people commonly felt that “real work” and making a contribution to the business was important. They did not, for example, want to

43 Department for Education ([BYC032](#))

44 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#))

45 Inspire ([BYC031](#)), The Edge Foundation ([BYC005](#)), Q76 (James Lloyd), Q135 (Professor John Holman)

46 Q76 (James Lloyd), Q135 (Professor John Holman), Q213 (Rachel Saunders, Lauren Mistry, Yolande Burgess)

47 Q10 (Beatrice Cerkez). See also Elena Ewence ([BYC015](#)), Westminster City Council/Westminster Youth Council ([BYC031](#)), Staffordshire Youth Union ([BYC037](#)), Hounslow Youth Council ([BYC008](#))

48 Department for Education ([BYC032](#)), Greater Manchester Combined Youth Authority ([BYC014](#)), Elena Ewence ([BYC015](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)), Plymouth Youth Parliament ([BYC016](#)), Business in the Community ([BYC018](#)), Step up to Serve ([BYC019](#)), London Councils ([BYC020](#)), My AFK ([BYC021](#)), Ambitious about Autism ([BYC022](#)), YMCA England and Wales ([BYC025](#)), Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#)), Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), Westminster City Council ([BYC031](#)), House of Commons ([BYC034](#)), Elevation Networks ([BYC035](#)), Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#)), Inspire ([BYC041](#)), EEF ([BYC042](#)), vInspired ([BYC043](#))

49 Westminster Youth Council ([BYC031](#))

spend extended periods of time passively shadowing someone and observing them doing their job.⁵⁰ Staffordshire Youth Council felt that the opportunity to gain transferrable skills, especially teamwork, was key. They also hoped to “gain new networks and realise the opportunities that are available for them in preparation for the world of work”.⁵¹ Some young people felt that the prospect of a job following a placement was also important.⁵²

18. We repeatedly heard from organisations that provide, find and support young people to access work experience that, practically, the key to quality—and to ensuring young people get what they want and need from work experience—is a clear structure and purpose attached to each experience.⁵³ Kate McGoey, Senior Programme Manager at Barclays Lifeskills, told us that structure is “really important”. Businesses need to consider how to structure placements and other engagements carefully before young people join them, to ensure that “they are not just left sitting on their own watching someone else work but the experience is valuable to them and high quality”.⁵⁴ She and others also told us that high quality work experience requires young people themselves to be well prepared, clear about what they want from the experience, and willing to reflect afterwards on what they have learned.⁵⁵ As Transport for London’s James Lloyd explained:⁵⁶

Yes, it’s great to see a load of cool and different exciting things, but actually I also need to learn some work skills here. [...] We always try to get that balance right. It is a mixture of exciting, inspirational, “Wow, we never knew that you did that,” with, “I have walked away and I know how to write a work email. I know how to maybe answer a phone or talk to somebody in a professional way.” It is whatever that young person feels they need to develop to the next step.

19. The Department, and organisations tasked with delivering Government policy on work experience, agreed that helping young people to prepare for and reflect on their experiences is vital to them realising their full benefits.⁵⁷ Sarah Yong, Head of Government Relations at the Careers & Enterprise Company, told us that a high quality placement is dependent on:

Good preparation, thinking about and having help to think about what you want to get out of that placement, the types of things you might want to learn more about, the questions you might want to ask and what might be expected of you.

She continued that the placement itself should be “well-structured and should not just be about doing one thing the whole week. It should be something that tries to give you a real insight into what it might be like to be an employee at that place.” Finally, she emphasised, there should be feedback and reflection: “a chance for that young person to think about

50 Westminster Youth Council ([BYC031](#)), Trafford Youth Council ([BYC033](#)), Greater Manchester Combined Youth Authority ([BYC014](#))

51 Staffordshire Youth Council ([BYC037](#))

52 Trafford Youth Council ([BYC033](#)).

53 [Q69 \(Melissa Lawrence\)](#), [Q70–74 \(Kate McGoey and James Lloyd\)](#), [Q174 \(Sarah Yong\)](#), [Q213 \(Lauren Mistry\)](#), [Q245 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#)

54 [Q74 \(Kate McGoey\)](#)

55 [Q112 \(Melissa Lawrence, James Lloyd\)](#), BITC ([BYC018](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#))

56 [Q112 \(James Lloyd\)](#)

57 Department for Education ([BYC032](#)), Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#))

what they got out of the placement and what they learnt”.⁵⁸ Recognising the crucial role of preparation and reflection, the Department announced in 2014 that it would task the CEC with creating an “Enterprise Passport”. The Department intended the Enterprise Passport to be part of a “system which motivates young people to take part in activities to build their employability”, providing a reflective digital record of all extra-curricular and enterprise-related activities that students participate in.⁵⁹ CEC’s Christine Hodgson emphasised that she felt the passport was a “superb idea” that CEC “would still love to do”.⁶⁰ In 2016–17, however, the Department withdrew funding for the initiative.⁶¹

20. Young people want their work experience to be meaningful: whether broadening their understanding of jobs they might do, gaining transferrable skills, or being able to demonstrate “real work” skills to prospective employers. The quality of individual placements and encounters matters in this respect. But it is not all that matters. To really make the most of work experience young people need support to prepare, reflect and build their understanding of work and careers. The Department’s intention to fund a universal, digital Enterprise Passport scheme could have been an important level in helping them to do. Its decision to withdraw funding for the Passport is regrettable. We recommend the Department reinstate funding for the Enterprise Passport, engaging with the Careers & Enterprise Company to agree a clear and timely plan for its delivery.

Finding and accessing work experience

21. One of the proposals debated by the Youth Parliament in 2017 referred to creating an online “work experience hub” for young people between the ages of 11–18: a platform where they would be able to find and access work experience opportunities. Throughout the debate, young people from across the UK spoke of the difficulties of finding and accessing work experience, particularly emphasising socio-economic and geographical inequalities. They overwhelmingly argued that a new online platform could provide a solution to this problem.⁶² Witnesses to our inquiry told us that such a hub could take a number of forms: from a simple search engine for opportunities to more sophisticated projects aiming to improve co-ordination between young people, schools and businesses.

22. A number of Government-backed online careers hubs already exist in the UK. They include *Connect to Success* in Northern Ireland, *Careers Wales*, and *My World of Work* in Scotland.⁶³ In England, the National Careers Service website, which is currently undergoing a redesign, contains some, limited, information on employability skills and how to find work.⁶⁴ We also heard about local initiatives: for example “Trident” in Barking and Dagenham.⁶⁵ Callum Kelly, a young person from the borough, praised this as having given him “a good overview” of the grades needed to do specific jobs as well as a list of available placements.⁶⁶ Young people taking part in the 2017 Youth Parliament perceived significant disparities in provision between the different regions of the UK. As

58 [Q174 \(Sarah Yong\)](#)

59 Department for Education, [Press release: new careers and enterprise company for schools](#), December 2014

60 Oral evidence taken by the Education Committee, [Q829 \(Christine Hodgson\)](#)

61 Oral evidence taken by the Education Committee, [Q829 \(Christine Hodgson\)](#)

62 [UK Youth Parliament debate 2017](#), col 25–35.

63 [Connect to Success NI](#), [Careers Wales](#), [My World of Work](#)

64 [National Careers Service](#)

65 [Q24 \(Callum Kelly\)](#)

66 [Q24 \(Callum Kelly\)](#)

one representative from Northern Ireland commented: “I can’t help but feel that the young people of England have been let down by past Governments not providing a hub such as we have and the one that we propose today.”⁶⁷

23. The young people we heard from were generally enthusiastic about the idea of creating a new, central hub. Beatrice Cerkez, a representative of Westminster Youth Council, told us.⁶⁸

I found when I was looking for work experience that I really did wish that a platform like this [an online hub] existed. I think that was the feeling among many of my peers, especially because our generation is so computer literate, if that makes sense. I think it would be a very useful platform that would be widely used, if it existed on a wide scale.

The young people we heard from emphasised that given variation in the support and advice young people receive on work experience, a national-level online hub could help produce more consistent provision. They also suggested a hub would help young people make more informed decisions and access a wider range of placements. In turn, this could help reduce inequalities in access to work experience. For example, when asked if an internet hub could help boost social mobility, Beatrice Cerkez answered: “Yes, definitely, in order to make sure that [finding work experience relies] less on connections.”⁶⁹ However, Callum Kelly perceived some risks to a national hub. He explained:⁷⁰

If it was more local, you have an equal chance with those in your area. If it was national, we should be thinking about whether someone from a lower-class area will have an equal chance to those from a higher-class area who have had a larger chance their entire life compared with those with a lower-class background, who have not had many connections in their life.

24. Other witnesses were more apprehensive about the value that a new online service could add—including in bringing about more equitable access. Katy Hampshire, Director of Operations and Programmes at Education and Employers, explained that many of the disparities in work experience result from young people having insufficient access to good quality support and guidance. In the absence of well-informed support, they opt for “what they are used to and know [...] they still might self-select into things that might not push them in terms of careers”.⁷¹ A hub might help ultimately them find a placement, but before they get to that point there is “a need for support [...] to push them and to say ‘actually no, you could look at a work experience placement with this company over here’”.⁷² Dr Julie Moote reiterated this point. She explained that her research had found students choosing placements because of their “convenience”, despite having access to online resources designed to help them choose a suitable placement.⁷³ She therefore suggested that online hubs and advice services cannot replace in-person, expert support. The CEC’s research

67 [UK Youth Parliament debate 2017](#), col. 29

68 [Q23 \(Beatrice Cerkez\)](#) See also [Q20–24](#) (Taiwo Afolabi, Callum Kelly, Tom Hawkins)

69 [Q47 \(Beatrice Cerkez\)](#)

70 [Q27 \(Callum Kelly\)](#)

71 [Q146 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#)

72 [Ibid.](#)

73 [Q146 \(Dr Julie Moote\)](#)

on “what works” in online provision provided further support for these perspectives. The CEC found that online careers support needs to exist in the context of wider offline careers support programmes. It is “not a replacement for professional career guidance”.⁷⁴

25. A further significant concern we heard was fear of duplicating existing resources and provision. Witnesses pointed out that there is already a multiplicity of resources aiming to advise young people on their careers and support their transitions into work. This includes not just the national and local “hubs” discussed above, but programmes such as Barclays LifeSkills, and a wide range of third and private sector provision.⁷⁵ Accordingly, Bhavina Bharkhada, Education and Skills Policy Adviser at EEF, a manufacturing, engineering and technology employers’ association; stated: “I would say no further duplication, because there are so many other hubs”. Steve Radley, Policy Director at the Construction Industry Training Board, agreed. He suggested that rather than seek to create something new, “it would be a wise move for Government to look at what is already out there”.⁷⁶ He, and other witnesses felt that a more helpful approach could be for Government to signpost young people towards good quality services, opportunities and support.⁷⁷ Dr Deirdre Hughes explained that England is unique in the United Kingdom in not already having such a service. She described this as:⁷⁸

The English experiment [...] which is to leave lots of things to chance and hope that young people will navigate their way smoothly through myriad different providers.

26. Witnesses told us that simply creating a hub and hoping young people will use it is not enough. The Department would also need to consider carefully how it might be promoted to young people and those organisations that support them. Members of the 2017 Youth Parliament touched on this issue. Leah Quaile, Member for Northern Ireland, commented that the existing *Connect NI* hub has a “publicity problem [...] some young people do not even know it exists”.⁷⁹ The need for promotion of existing resources and support was also apparent in the evidence we took: the young people that we heard from often seemed not to be aware of the wide range of online resources and support that they could already access. We heard some evidence to suggest that young people themselves could play an important role in driving engagement. For example, in Scotland young people are recruited to act as ambassadors for *My World of Work*—itself identified as a model of best practice in career support by the OECD.⁸⁰ Early signs suggested that this approach was helping to raise the profile of Scotland’s hub and, in turn, to improve understanding amongst young people, schools and parents about the importance of career support generally.⁸¹

27. We heard that the ongoing re-design of the National Careers Service website provides an opportunity for the Department to develop its approach to online work experience provision and support in England. Dr Deirdre Hughes told us that the Government “need to ensure that the National Careers Service website meets young people’s needs”. She recommended we consider the part that website could play in connecting young people

74 Careers & Enterprise Company, [The evidence base for careers websites: What works?](#) 2017 p.iv

75 Q74 (Kate McGoey)

76 [Q295 \(Steve Radley\)](#), Q295 (Bhavina Bharkhada)

77 [Q295 \(Steve Radley\)](#) See also Bhavina Bharkhada and Ashley Hodges response to Q295

78 [Q260 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

79 [UK Youth Parliament Debate 2017](#), col 29

80 OECD [Working it out: Career Guidance and Employer Engagement](#), July 2018, p57

81 Ibid.

with good quality support.⁸² The Department told us that it aspires for the website to provide “information, advice and guidance” to “everyone”. However, when we asked if it would include information on work experience, Clare MacDonald, Deputy Director of Careers and Basic Skills at DfE, told us that “there is not a specific plan for the website currently that involves something specific on work experience”.⁸³ She also told us the Department was intending to “publicise [the website] and make young people aware of it”, but had “not particularly thought about” getting young people directly involved in its promotion. She did however acknowledge that this was “great idea”, which the Department would be “really happy” to pursue.⁸⁴

28. England lacks the comprehensive, Government-backed online provision for work experience and careers guidance that is available in many other countries. The redevelopment of the National Careers Service website offered a clear chance to address this gap and provide young people with a valuable service—but the Department has chosen not to take it. This is a missed opportunity.

29. We recommended the Department dedicate a section of the redesigned National Careers Service website to work experience, pulling together and signposting towards existing high-quality resources and services. We further recommend the Department work with young people to co-produce this resource, and that it involves them as ambassadors in promoting the site on an ongoing basis once it is launched.

82 [Q266 \(Dr Deidre Hughes\)](#)

83 [Q325 \(Department for Education\)](#)

84 [Q326 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

3 Work experience at school and college

What schools should deliver

30. The Department for Education published its *Careers strategy* (“the Strategy”) in December 2017. The Strategy states that a “thriving careers system” is key to improving social mobility.⁸⁵ This system should “help people understand the range of opportunities available to them in today’s economy and acquire the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in the workplaces of the future”.⁸⁶ The Strategy says, however, that careers provision in schools has not usually been given “the status it deserves”, resulting in patchiness and inconsistency. The Strategy, and accompanying statutory guidance in schools, sets out the Department’s approach to improving the consistency of provision and what is required of schools and colleges. This aspires to create a “culture of having the right advice, in the right place, at the right time [...] backed up by the experiences with employers and educators that make a difference”.⁸⁷ The Department defines this culture through the “Gatsby Benchmarks” (see Box 2, below): eight benchmarks, derived from the Gatsby Foundation’s review of national and international research, that signify excellent careers provision.⁸⁸

Box 2: The Gatsby Benchmarks

1. **A stable careers programme.** Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.
2. **Learning from career and labour market information.** Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
3. **Addressing the needs of each student.** Students have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each student. A school’s careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4. **Linking curriculum learning to careers.** All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
5. **Encounters with employers and employees.** Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
6. **Experiences of workplaces.** 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.

85 DfE, [Careers strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents](#), December 2017, p.3

86 *Ibid.*

87 *Ibid.*, p.4

88 Gatsby Foundation, [Good career guidance](#), 2014

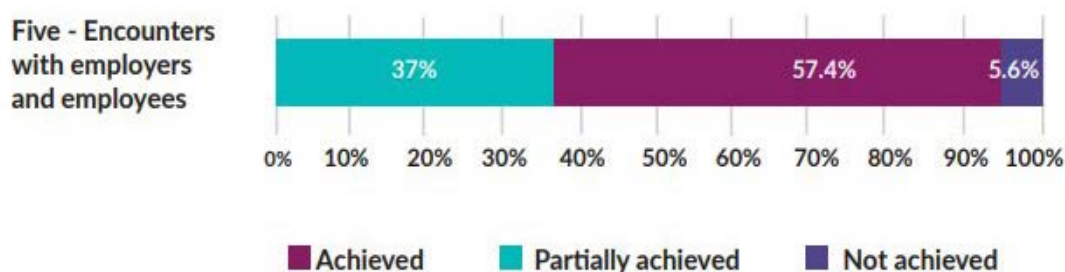
7. Encounters with further and higher education. All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.

8. Personal guidance. Every student should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made.

Source: [DfE Careers strategy](#), p.19

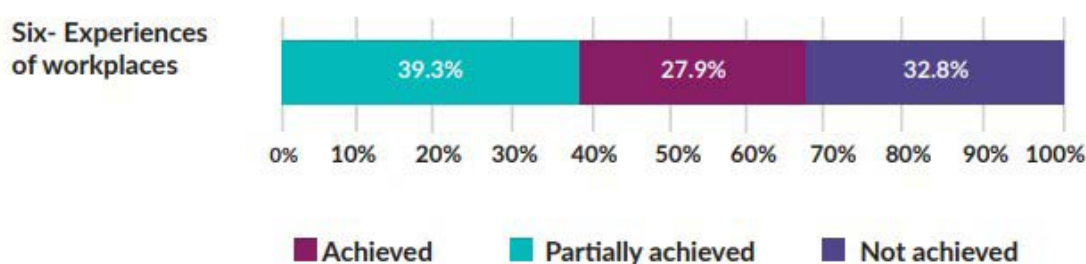
31. Professor John Holman, Senior Adviser to the Gatsby Foundation, told us that it is vital that schools view the Benchmarks as a co-ordinated whole, rather than as individual objectives to tick off. He explained that “the philosophy behind these Benchmarks is that you need to be doing all eight, and doing them well [...] they kind of support each other.”⁸⁹ The most relevant benchmarks to work experience are Benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees) and Benchmark 6 (experiences of workplaces). Professor Holman emphasised that in delivering good quality work experiences schools must ensure “encounters with employers as the breadth and experiences of workplaces as the depth” of provision.⁹⁰ Research by the CEC showed, however, that in 2017, 57.4% of schools were fully delivering Benchmark 5, while just 27.9% were fully delivering Benchmark 6.⁹¹ Benchmark 6 relates to more substantive experiences of the workplace, which almost one in three schools were failing to deliver (see Figures 1 and 2, below).

Figure 1: Proportion of schools achieving Benchmark 5



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company, State of the Nation report 2017. The Report data obtained from 578 schools obtained via CEC's self-evaluation tool, Compass.

Figure 2: Proportion of schools achieving Benchmark 6



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company, State of the Nation report 2017

89 [Q150 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

90 [Q135 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

91 Careers & Enterprise Company, [State of the Nation 2017](#), October 2017

32. The Careers & Enterprise Company—an independent organisation that is tasked with co-ordinating schools, colleges, employers, funders and providers to ensure young people receive consistently high quality careers support—was established by the Department in 2017. The CEC’s role includes:⁹²

- Investing in established, proven careers and enterprise programmes to scale up their delivery and expand them into geographic areas of need;
- conducting and commissioning research on “what works” in careers support; and
- developing digital infrastructure to support young people into work and help schools improve their careers provision. For example, the CEC has developed Compass, a tool which enables schools and colleges to self-assess and benchmark their careers provision.⁹³

The CEC’s role was extended further in the Strategy, which gave it responsibility for ensuring that schools deliver careers provision that meets the Gatsby Benchmarks. To date, the CEC’s practical work in this area has focused on developing its Enterprise Coordinator and Adviser network (see Box 3). In December 2017 when the Strategy was published, the network was operational in around 50% of schools and colleges.⁹⁴ The Department expects that all schools and colleges will have access to an Enterprise Adviser by 2020. It hopes that this will help schools and colleges develop stronger links with local employers, enabling them to offer a wider range of work experience opportunities to their students.⁹⁵

33. The Department has made a substantial investment in funding CEC’s work. In March 2018 the Department told Parliament that CEC had received £6 million of grant funding in 2015–16, £16 million in 2016–17 and £19 million in 2017–18.⁹⁶ The 2018–19 funding levels were not available to us, but the Department has said it expects funding to “reflect the expanded role that the Company now has implementing the careers strategy”.⁹⁷ It includes, for example, a £5 million fund over two years to support the establishment of Career Hubs: groups of up schools, colleges, universities and training providers working together to improve access to careers advice and support within particular geographic areas. In October 2018 the Department announced it would invest further in Career Hubs, doubling the number of areas supported from 20 to 40.⁹⁸ CEC also has responsibility for a £5 million Investment Fund, aimed specifically at supporting vulnerable young people.⁹⁹

Box 3: Careers & Enterprise Company Enterprise Coordinators and Advisers

The CEC works with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)—business-led partnerships between businesses and local authorities that cover the whole of England—to develop a national network of Enterprise Coordinators and Advisers. Enterprise Coordinators are dedicated staff, co-funded by CEC and LEPs. They are placed within the LEP. They are expected to work with school and college leadership teams to build employer engagement. Enterprise Coordinators are also expected to connect each school or colleges with their own Enterprise Adviser—a senior volunteer from a local business.

92 <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/about-us>

93 <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/compass-benchmark-tool>

94 [Department for Education \(BYC032\)](#)

95 [Careers strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents](#), p.9

96 [WQ 134614](#)

97 *ibid.*

98 DfE, [News story: new education and skills measures announced](#), October 2018

99 [Careers & Enterprise Company, Careers & Enterprise Fund 2018](#)

The Enterprise Adviser should then help the school or college develop further links with local businesses, enabling them to offer students a wide range of experiences with employers.

Source: Careers & Enterprise Company

34. Witnesses saw potential in CEC’s approach to helping schools: both by co-ordinating activity around the Benchmarks, and in its wider contribution to careers support.¹⁰⁰ Professor Holman told us that although their work on the Benchmarks is still in its early stages, he was “very positive about the potential” of the CEC. He felt they are “well run, they have achieved a lot in a short amount of time and I think they can do it”.¹⁰¹ Katy Hampshire, Director of Programmes and Operations at Education and Employers, explained that if the CEC’s Enterprise Adviser network is “able to do what they are set up to do, which is to strategically support a school with what is already out there [...] this will work well”.¹⁰² We also heard repeatedly that the Benchmarks offer a helpful framework, and set out a high standard of provision.¹⁰³ The Edge Foundation told us that the emphasis on a coherent, comprehensive careers system created a “real opportunity for [a] step change in this area” and complimented the Gatsby Foundation’s “excellent” work.¹⁰⁴ Anna Howard, Programme Manager at Inspire Education Business Partnership, told us that schools remain “very stretched” in terms of resources. Despite this, the Benchmarks are potentially “really helpful”, offering “a bit more direction [which] should help schools to consistently deliver those experiences that will help young people”.¹⁰⁵

35. Conversely, we heard that CEC’s ability to help deliver effective provision consistently across England has not yet been proven. Some witnesses suggested reasons for concern. Ofsted’s 2016 report on career guidance noted that initiatives involving LEPs (which include CEC’s flagship Enterprise Adviser network) were, at that point, in the “very early stages of development”. Business leaders had raised concerns that there seemed to be “little coherence to provision and a lack of strategy”. They were also “largely unaware” of CEC’s work.¹⁰⁶ Plymouth City Council observed that approaches of the kind that CEC takes are not new. Education Business Partnerships, for example, “have been in existence for many years” and were DfE-funded up to 2011. They had delivered successful provision in some—but not all—parts of the country.¹⁰⁷ We heard that delivering this consistent provision will be the central task that CEC faces in the coming years. EEF’s Bhavina Bharkhada told us that while she was convinced CEC “will have an impact [...] actually scaling it up to be able to impact all areas across the country will be a challenge”.¹⁰⁸

36. Witnesses told us that it is important that the Department ensures it is getting a good return on its “significant public investment” in CEC, especially in light of the wider financial pressures on schools.¹⁰⁹ DfE’s Clare MacDonald told us that CEC “build evaluations into all of their programmes”. It is also “something that we ask them to report

100 [Q83 \(James Lloyd\)](#), [Q156 \(Professor John Holman\)](#), [Q157 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#), [Q227 \(Sarah Horner\)](#), [Q302 \(Bhavina Bharkhada\)](#), [Q303 \(Ashley Hodges\)](#)

101 [Q156 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

102 [Q156 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#)

103 [Q163 \(Professor John Holman\)](#), [Q178 \(Anna Howard\)](#), [Q190 \(Sarah Yong\)](#)

104 [The Edge Foundation \(BYC005\)](#)

105 [Q178 \(Anna Howard\)](#)

106 Ofsted, [Getting ready for work](#), November 2016, pp.4–5

107 [Plymouth City Council \(BYC026\)](#)

108 [Q301 \(Bhavina Bharkhada\)](#)

109 [Q240 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#)

on” as part of their financial agreement with the Department. She explained that as CEC’s work progresses, the Department is starting to build in more expectations on outputs—the effects of programmes—rather than focusing on inputs—such as how many schools are receiving support.¹¹⁰ However, we heard that the Department should take a more active approach to evaluating and monitoring careers provision work, including looking at value for money. Plymouth City Council suggested that government should “review the impact of CEC along with wider careers related programmes”, to understand how resources can best be used to address challenges in delivering work experience.¹¹¹ Dr Deirdre Hughes agreed, suggesting that the Department needs to:¹¹²

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 [...] Government needs to make sure that that is working. 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.¹¹³

37. The Department has great faith in the Careers & Enterprise Company driving real improvements in careers provision and access to work experience in schools across England. The Department’s co-ordinated approach to this task, including the framework provided by the Gatsby Benchmarks, is both very welcome and much-needed. But previous attempts to drive up quality and consistency of provision have not resulted in high quality support for all young people. The Department must ensure the Careers & Enterprise Company does not replicate the mistakes of the past.

38. In light of the public money invested in it, we recommend that the Department ensures the Careers & Enterprise Company is held to account for its provision. The Department should instruct Ofsted to inspect the quality of Careers & Enterprise Company-funded provision, as it does for the National Careers Service. We also recommend that the Department commission a full, independent review of the Careers & Enterprise Company’s impact in schools and colleges. This should take into account its impact on improving access to work experience for the most disadvantaged young people.

Work experience at Key Stage 4

39. The obligation for schools and colleges to ensure that all students undertook “work-related learning” (usually interpreted as work experience placements) at Key Stage 4 (aged 14–16) was removed in 2012, as recommended in the Wolf Review of Vocational Education. The Review concluded that the KS4 requirement had “served its time”, was “very expensive” and “too often [did] not even involve being in a work place”.¹¹⁴

40. The Department told us that its existing approach to work experience and employer engagement in schools should ensure all young people receive high quality, varied

110 [Q318 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

111 [Plymouth City Council \(BYC026\)](#)

112 [Q266 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

113 Ofsted is responsible for inspecting National Careers Service-funded provision. See Education and Skills Funding Agency, [National Careers Service area-based contracts business rules](#). April 2018

114 A. Wolf, [Review of vocational education](#), March 2011, p.131

provision—without the need for a statutory duty on schools to provide a placement. DfE suggested this is accomplished primarily through Gatsby Benchmarks 5 and 6.¹¹⁵ These aim to ensure that young people receive sufficient breadth and depth of encounters with employers throughout their time in education.¹¹⁶ The Department explained that this reflects its priority of ensuring young people receive “frequent and early contact with employers” rather than stipulating the specific format, and point in time that placements should take place.¹¹⁷ It told us that implementing the Benchmarks should mean all young people have a minimum of one encounter per year with employers from the age of 11, via a “range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes” (Benchmark 5). It should also mean that before the age of 16, young people have “first-hand experiences of the workplace” (Benchmark 6).¹¹⁸ The statutory guidance for schools advises that for students up to the age of 16 this can take a range of forms besides a traditional placement, including workplace visits, job shadowing or volunteering.¹¹⁹

41. We heard some doubts over the extent to which the Benchmarks are delivering high quality experience for all young people. CEC research on careers provision in English secondary schools in 2016–17 showed that “current provision typically falls short of the standard set” by the Benchmarks.¹²⁰ This reflects the “patchiness of careers and enterprise provision across the country” and “[raises] concerns about the overall level of quality”.¹²¹ 45% of secondary schools were failing to ensure that the overwhelming majority of their students had a “meaningful experience” of the workplace by the end of Key Stage 4 (Benchmark 6).¹²² We heard some groups are particularly likely to miss out. For example, organisations representing disabled young people and those with learning difficulties told us that without specialist, targeted support these young people are especially likely to miss out on meaningful work experience—despite often wanting to take part.¹²³ This was in spite of the broad definition of a “meaningful experience” set out in the guidance (for example, including workplace visits and shadowing as well as substantive “work experience”).¹²⁴ 63% of schools and colleges were failing to ensure that students had at least one meaningful encounter with an employer every year that they are in school. This led CEC to conclude that while the overwhelming majority of schools surveyed were “offering some employer engagement”, it was “less common for these interactions to be regular and sustained throughout schooling”.¹²⁵

42. Some witnesses accordingly recommended reinstating the duty on schools to offer a substantive placement during Key Stage 4.¹²⁶ Many of the young people that we heard suggested a compulsory approach might also help to bring about more equal access. Westminster Youth Council members explained that without a compulsory duty, “too

115 [Department for Education \(BYC032\)](#)

116 [Q135 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

117 [Department for Education \(BYC032\)](#)

118 Department for Education, [Careers strategy](#), December 2017, p.19

119 Department for Education, [Careers guidance and access to education and training providers: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff](#), October 2018, p.28

120 Careers & Enterprise Company, [State of the Nation 2017](#), p.IV

121 *Ibid.*, p.5

122 *Ibid.*, p.20

123 See, for example, My AFK ([BYC021](#)), Ambitious about Autism ([BYC022](#)), [Q174 \(Clare Walsh\)](#)

124 Department for Education, [Careers guidance and access to education and training providers: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff](#), p.8

125 Careers & Enterprise Company, [State of the Nation 2017](#), p.19

126 See, for example, YMCA England and Wales ([BYC025](#)), EEF ([BYC042](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#))

much is left to chance and personal connections”.¹²⁷ Dr Moote told us that it is “possible that removing the statutory duty” has contributed to some of the patterns of inequality in access to opportunities. When younger students have to self-refer and find their own work experience, it is often those with more confidence and social capital who are able to access high quality experiences.¹²⁸ EEF pointed to wider benefits associated with a compulsory duty, suggesting it could help schools and industry to build stronger links with one another. In turn, this could encourage young people to try out types of work that they might not otherwise consider, and help create a pipeline of young people interested in working in industry.¹²⁹

43. Many witnesses, however, were more cautious about the idea of reintroducing a compulsory duty at Key Stage 4. We heard a widely-held concern, that reintroducing a rigidly defined duty could compromise the quality of experience that young people receive.¹³⁰ Anna Howard of Inspire Education Businesses Partnership told us, for example, that although a compulsory duty might help to give equal access to all young people in schools, there is a risk that it “becomes one-size-fits-all and, even worse than that, a tick-box exercise”.¹³¹ As Barclays’ Kate McGoey explained: “once things become mandatory [...] the quality can then fall away” as schools choose meeting targets and requirements over offering students personalised, holistic support.¹³²

44. We heard that any offer must balance flexibility with consistency. Young people told us their concerns about who gets offered work experience in schools—and who, in contrast, has to make do with a more limited range of activities.¹³³ Dr Moote agreed, explaining that her research had identified concerns “from students and their parents that they are not being put forward enough for good quality work experience”.¹³⁴ Plymouth Council observed that the guidance offered itself could breed inconsistency and disparities in this area. Schools may interpret Benchmark 6, in particular, differently for different young people. They explained that “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”—yet both would meet the requirements of the guidance.¹³⁵ The Department told us that, beyond the school-level and area-based work carried out by the CEC, it has little means of auditing consistency of provision between young people. DfE’s Clare MacDonald explained that the specific provision and quality of provision offered to young people is not something DfE assesses “in a formal way. It is not something that we audit or collect data on.”¹³⁶

45. The Government has replaced the mandatory duty for schools to offer work experience at Key Stage 4 with an obligation for schools to fulfil the Gatsby Benchmarks. These require schools to ensure young people have a range of “work experiences” from age 11 to 19. The reasoning behind this decision is sound. The Benchmarks enable schools to design flexible programmes that suit individual young people, moving

127 Westminster City Council ([BYC031](#)). See also: Greater Manchester Combined Youth Authority ([BYC014](#)). See also Plymouth Youth Parliament ([BYC017](#))

128 [Q139 \(Dr Julie Moote\)](#)

129 EEF ([BYC042](#)). We discuss this further in relation to industrial strategy in Chapter 4.

130 [Q78 \(Kate McGoey\)](#), [Q77 \(James Lloyd\)](#), [Q179 \(Eileen Gallagher, Anna Howard\)](#), [Q299 \(Ashley Hodges\)](#), [Q336 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

131 [Q179 \(Anna Howard\)](#)

132 [Q78 \(Kate McGoey\)](#)

133 [Q31 \(Bethanie Mortenson, Beatrice Cerkez\)](#)

134 [Q162 \(Dr Julie Moote\)](#)

135 Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#))

136 [Q345 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

away from a one-size-fits-all approach. But with this comes a risk of replicating old inequalities and disadvantages in the types of experiences that young people are offered and take up. The Department must be vigilant to avoid repeating old errors. It has little means of understanding and mapping the activities that individual young people fulfil in respect of the Benchmarks. It must ensure those students who could benefit most from substantive work placements are consistently able to access them. Better opportunities must not be the preserve of more privileged students.

46. *We recommend the Department update the statutory guidance to schools and colleges to include a “right to be offered” a substantive work placement at Key Stage 4. We also recommend it work with a representative sample of schools to track the activities that students fulfil in respect of Benchmarks 5 and 6 with reference to pupil characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, disability and socioeconomic background) and type of experience. The Department should publish this data and use it to produce an annual “health check” on young peoples’ parity of access to work experience.*

Leadership

47. There is strong evidence that good careers advice and guidance, including providing young people work experiences, is best delivered via a “school wide approach” which career guidance specialists, teachers and school leaders all play a role in devising and delivering.¹³⁷ Schools that see career guidance and experiences of work as an optional add-on, rather than something embedded across the curriculum and prioritised, will almost inevitably deliver poorer quality, less comprehensive provision.¹³⁸ Witnesses emphasised to us that strong leadership on careers is key to delivering this kind of approach.¹³⁹ Professor Holman, and several others, explained that often leadership is the single most important factor in driving up the quality of school provision—even more so than financial resources. He said:¹⁴⁰

The schools in [the Gatsby Benchmark pilot] in the north east did not have heaps of money poured on them and, I’m afraid, in the foreseeable future, schools will not get large amounts of money [...] It boils down to leadership. If you have someone in the school who is leading, who feels the responsibility for it and who is empowered by the head teacher to do it [...] You can make rapid progress, because it helps schools to reprioritise.

48. The Department’s Careers Strategy recognises the importance of leadership. It requires all schools to identify and name a dedicated Careers Leader by September 2018.¹⁴¹ This could be a teaching or non-teaching member of staff, but the Department specifies they “should have influence across the school and buy-in from the Governors and Senior Leadership team”.¹⁴² The Strategy explains that the role is more strategic than the roles

137 See, for example, Musset, P. and Mytna Kurekova, L., [Working it out: career guidance and employer engagement](#), OECD, June 2018, p.47

138 Ofsted, [Getting ready for work, 2016](#)

139 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), BITC ([BYC018](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), [Q450 \(Professor John Holman\)](#), [Q189 \(Sarah Yong\)](#),

140 [Q154 \(Professor John Holman\)](#). See also: Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), BITC ([BYC018](#)), [Q262 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

141 Department for Education, [Careers strategy](#), December 2017, p.18

142 Department for Education, [Careers guidance and access to education and training providers: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff](#), January 2018

currently played by careers advisers in many schools. Materials developed by the CEC fill out the specifications of the role further. The CEC emphasises that irrespective of who the individual is, the key principle of the role is that it offers a “single and unified point of responsibility and accountability for careers provision”.¹⁴³ The CEC explains that this “has significant advantages over alternative models where responsibility for careers is distributed around the school or outsourced to third party providers”.¹⁴⁴

49. The Department initially committed to funding training for 500 Careers Leaders. In October 2018, it extended this to 1,300 training bursaries.¹⁴⁵ Clare MacDonald explained that the Department’s intention in providing this funding is to improve the status of and level of training associated with careers staff. She explained that frequently schools will already have a member of staff dealing with careers, but that “they often do not have training and are not connected through to the headteacher or the senior leadership team of the school”.¹⁴⁶ Alongside this, the CEC will also fund the development of online resources for Careers Leaders, aiming to support their continued professional development. Beyond this, however, Careers Leaders are not required to hold any professional career advice or leadership qualifications.¹⁴⁷

50. Strong leadership is critical in building strong careers programmes and in ensuring access to work experience. The Department’s plans to boost the status of career professionals and its commitment to funding training and producing resources for those staff is very welcome. But it could go further in ensuring that their professional training remains at the cutting edge, emphasising the importance of challenging young people to look at a broad range of career options that they may not have otherwise considered. We recommend that the Department amend its guidance on Career Leaders to require them to hold a professional qualification, be registered with the appropriate professional body, and fulfil any associated Continuing Professional Development requirements.

Funding and technical education

51. Witnesses were divided over the case for providing additional, direct, ongoing funding to schools to support young people to carry out work experience. The CEC and Professor John Holman, amongst others, felt that great strides forward could be made with the right leadership in place.¹⁴⁸ Additional funding would be useful, but the lack of it is by no means a barrier to improving provision.¹⁴⁹ Dr Deirdre Hughes argued, however, that schools and colleges are already facing substantial pressures on their budgets. This can mean that work experience and careers support slips down their lists of priorities,

143 Careers & Enterprise Company, [Understanding the role of the Careers Leader](#), 2018, p.8

144 Ibid.

145 Department for Education, [New education and skills measures announced](#), October 2018

146 [Q320 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

147 Professional careers qualifications already exist: for example, the Career Development Institute’s [Qualification in Career Guidance](#).

148 [Q155 \(Professor John Holman\)](#), [Q188–189 \(Sarah Yong\)](#), [Q341 \(Clare Macdonald\)](#)

149 [Q155 \(Professor John Holman\)](#), [Q188–189 \(Sarah Yong\)](#)

even if the intention to improve support is there.¹⁵⁰ She told us that there is a case for providing dedicated funding to schools for careers staff on an ongoing basis. Although the Career Leader role and associated training is a “really great idea”.¹⁵¹

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.

52. Some of our witnesses made suggestions on where additional, direct funding could come from. These included using a proportion of the Apprenticeship Levy to fund schools to fund support and advice on technical placements for young people: particularly those under the age of 16.¹⁵² The Department intends to introduce a new “T Level” qualification from 2020: a vocational qualification intended to operate on a par with A Levels.¹⁵³ Youth Employment UK, a charity, explained that if young people do not have access to high quality work experience provision prior to 16, they may struggle to decide which sector they want to specialise in—or even to understand the different vocational options that are open to them.¹⁵⁴ In turn, this could mitigate against the Department achieving the level of T Level and Apprenticeship starts that it wants. Sarah Horner, Head of Policy and Communications at the Learning and Work Institute, told us that there is a need to be “creative” and “flexible” with how the Levy is used.¹⁵⁵ When we put this suggestion the Department, officials told us that there are a “lot of questions and asks of Government” on how the Levy might be used, and that these are “always seriously considered”. However, Clare MacDonald explained, the Levy is “still bedding in” and the Department is “reasonably clear on the need for a period of stability” in its operation.¹⁵⁶

53. Without dedicated funding, there is a risk schools will continue to see careers education and work experience as a “luxury”. This has potential implications for the Government’s ambitions on vocational education. If young people struggle to get appropriate experience of industry before they make their post-16 choices, then they may also struggle to understand the appeal of T Levels and Apprenticeships. The Department is clear that the Apprenticeship Levy needs a period of stability in order to bed in. But it should be open to using funds raised by the Levy flexibly and creatively to ensure it achieves those ambitions. *The Department should conduct research on the links between work experience and choosing technical education at 16+, with a view to diverting some funding into schools to support work experience provision. The Department should set out plans and timescales for this research in response to our report.*

150 [Q262 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#). See also [Q210 \(Anna Howard and Eileen Gallagher\)](#), [Q152 \(Dr Julie Moote\)](#), Plymouth City Council ([BYC017](#))

151 [Q262 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

152 The Apprenticeship Levy came into place from April 2017. All employers with a pay bill of over £3 million per year have to pay 0.5% of the value of their pay bill, minus an allowance of £15,000. The resulting fund is used for apprenticeship training and assessment.

153 Department for Education, [Policy paper: introduction of T Levels](#), October 2018

154 Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)). See also [Q247 \(Sarah Horner\)](#), [Q269 \(Bhavina Bharkhada and Steve Radley\)](#), EEF ([BYC042](#)), Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#))

155 [Q247 \(Sarah Horner\)](#)

156 [Q373 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

Extending the current offer

Primary schools

54. The Department’s approach to work experience—including the Gatsby Benchmarks—focuses on young people aged eleven or older in secondary schools and colleges. Some witnesses told us that there is a case for beginning careers education and encounters with employers much earlier, in primary school.¹⁵⁷ London Ambitions, a joint project between the London LEP and London Councils, aims to ensure that all young people in London receive at least 100 hours experience of work before they are sixteen. Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director at London Councils, explained that their approach starts earlier than national provision.¹⁵⁸ Drawing on evidence of gender patterning in boys’ and girls’ career aspirations at a young age, she linked primary school experiences of and exposure to work and combatting gender stereotypes:¹⁵⁹

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. [Education and Employers, a charity] 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.

Several other witnesses agreed. Transport for London’s James Lloyd told us that it is “really hard” to address gender imbalances in industries such as technology and engineering “when you are working with 15, 16, 17 year olds [...] trying to undo stereotypes that have been there for a number of years”.¹⁶⁰ Transport for London works with primary schools to try to address this. Steve Radley, Policy Director at the Construction Industry Training Board agreed, explaining that “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 too late”.¹⁶¹

55. The Department’s Careers Strategy notes that “children form views about careers at an early age”. In particular, many young people perceive STEM subjects and careers as “too challenging or not suitable for them”.¹⁶² The Department says it is “learning more about what works to tackle gender stereotypes in both schools and employment”. It is working with the Government Equalities Office to “take positive steps towards eradicating gender norms in the classroom that lead to girls narrowing their career choices”.¹⁶³ The Department told us it is keen to understand how early careers education can feed into this effort.¹⁶⁴

157 [Step up to Serve \(BYC019\)](#), [London Councils \(BYC020\)](#), [Q111 \(James Lloyd\)](#), [Q136 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#), [Q213 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#), [Q241 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#), [Q263 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#), [Q275 \(Steve Radley\)](#)

158 [Q213 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#)

159 [Q213 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#). See, for example, Archer, L. et al. “Not girly, not sexy, not glamorous”: primary school girls’ and parents’ constructions of science aspirations, *Pedagogy, culture and society*, 21:1, 2013

160 [Q111 \(James Lloyd\)](#)

161 [Q275 \(Steve Radley\)](#). See also [Q136 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#), [Q213 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#), [Q241 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#), [Q263 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

162 Department for Education, [Careers strategy](#), December 2017, p.16

163 *Ibid.*

164 [Q309 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

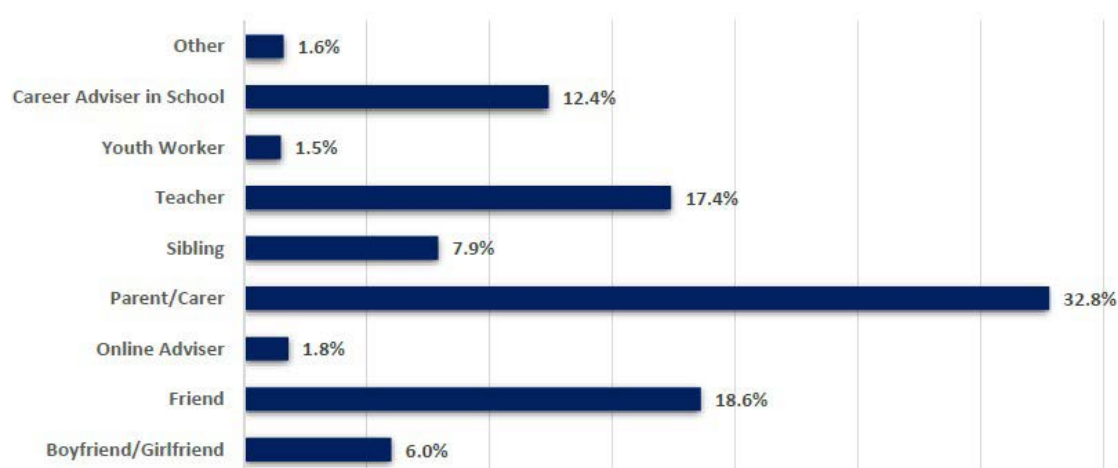
56. The Strategy noted that “many primary schools are already thinking about how best to introduce young children to ideas about the work they might do in future”. However, there is “no consistent approach across primary schools and limited evidence and best practice for schools to use when planning their activities”. The Strategy commits to providing £2 million of funding during 2018/19 to test and evaluate what works in primary schools, and sharing the results widely “so other schools can benefit and build their expertise”.¹⁶⁵ When pressed about timescales, the Department told us that their substantive research on “what works” in primary schools will “take a few years to come through”.¹⁶⁶

57. **Starting to build up young peoples’ understanding and awareness of work early can help combat stereotypes and encourage realistic ambitions. DfE’s recognition of this fact is encouraging. It must make sure that its investment in understanding “what works” is put to good use and continue to drive forward best practice in support young people—of all ages. The Department should, as soon as possible alongside its existing research, produce guidance for primary schools to deliver careers education and exposure to employers.**

Engaging parents

58. Parents play a central role in influencing and enabling young people’s decisions about work and work experience. Business in the Community described parents and carers as the “core influencers” on young people’s decisions.¹⁶⁷ A survey of 1,300 young people by the Borough of Poole reflected this view. It showed that parents were, by some distance, the people young people were most likely to go to for careers advice. 33% of the young people who responded to the survey said that a parent or carer would be their first choice for advice on education, employment or further training (see Figure 3, below).¹⁶⁸

Figure 3: Who would you talk to when making a decision about what to do next on education, employment or training?



Borough of Poole ([BYC009](#))

165 Department for Education, [Careers strategy](#), December 2017, p.15

166 [Q310 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

167 BITC ([BYC018](#)). See also: London Councils ([BYC020](#)), My AFK ([BYC021](#)), Ambitious about Autism ([BYC022](#)), Langley College ([BYC024](#)), YMCA England and Wales ([BYC025](#))

168 Borough of Poole ([BYC009](#))

59. Several witnesses told us that an over-reliance on parents and parental networks can contribute to disparities in access to work experience and good quality careers advice. Dr Moote and Professor Archer’s research with parents and young people in Year 11 showed that most work experience placements were organised by parents directly.¹⁶⁹ They demonstrated that this results in disparities: young people from families with less social capital seemed to be less likely to be strongly motivated to push to undertake a placement, and less likely to be able to draw on family connections in arranging one. This was especially marked in elite professions.¹⁷⁰ The Borough of Poole questioned more widely whether parents are necessarily well-informed enough about the full range of careers their children might access to give consistently good advice.¹⁷¹ This lack of knowledge is also frequently a concern for parent themselves: just half of those they surveyed by London Councils in 2017 felt they were well-informed enough about the different options available to offer their children accurate advice and support.¹⁷²

60. The Department told us that it recognises the importance of engaging parents. It is “thinking in quite an active way” about how it can best help schools engage with parents.¹⁷³ This is because “when you look at all the surveys of where people are getting their information from, that it is their parents—that’s the biggest thing”.¹⁷⁴ Witnesses were supportive of this approach: for example, London Councils told us that parents are a key part of taking a “whole school” approach to work experience.¹⁷⁵ However, they emphasised that this cannot be a substitute for high-quality, professional support with work experience in schools. Citing research by the Social Mobility Commission, London Councils told us that this remains a vital component of promoting social mobility for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, My AFK, a charity that supports young people with learning disabilities, emphasised that parents and carers and professionals should complement one another. Both have important roles to play in “raising aspirations, ambitions and expectations amongst students”.¹⁷⁷

61. Parents and carers remain, by some distance, the sources young people are most likely to go to for advice on work and careers. We wholeheartedly support the Department’s intention to understand better how it can help parents and carers support their children with work experience and careers advice more widely. Parents/carers and professional advice are two sides of the same coin: one should not be viewed as a substitute for building up the other. We recommend that alongside its work on improving careers advice in secondary and primary schools, the Department commissions research on “what works” in engaging parents at both secondary and primary level.

169 Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer (BYC007)

170 ASPIRES 2 Project spotlight: year 11 students’ views of careers education and work experience. See also Dr Julie Moote and Professor Louise Archer (BYC007), Sutton Trust (BYC011), Youth Employment UK (BYC016)

171 Borough of Poole (BYC009). See also My AFK (BYC021)

172 London Councils, *Ask the parents: the fifth year*, November 2017

173 Q376 (Clare MacDonald)

174 Ibid.

175 London Councils (BYC020)

176 London Councils (BYC020). See also Q139 (Dr Julie Moote), YMCA England and Wales (BYC025)

177 My AFK (BYC021)

4 Businesses and industrial strategy

Work experience and the Government's industrial strategy

62. The Government published its industrial strategy white paper, *Building a Britain fit for the future*, in December 2017. It set out the Government's plan to "create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK".¹⁷⁸ A priority for the strategy is to address disparities in the UK's economy. The foreword by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, noted that for all the "excellence" in many parts of British industry, "we have businesses, people and places whose level of productivity is well below what can be achieved".¹⁷⁹ The Industrial Strategy commits to upskilling the UK's workforce by creating a new technical education system (including approving apprenticeships and introducing T-Levels), investing in education to fill STEM skills shortages, and creating a new National Retraining Scheme to enable workers to re-skill.¹⁸⁰

63. Beyond technical education, *Building a Britain fit for the future* does not explicitly mention work experience as part of achieving the Government's aims.¹⁸¹ It does cite two further papers that feed in to the industrial strategy: the Department's for Education's Careers Strategy and social mobility plan. Both discuss the importance of careers advice, including work experience, as a tool to both boost the economy and improve social mobility.¹⁸² The Department told us this means that despite the lack of discussion of work experience in the central industrial strategy paper, work experience is positioned "reasonably centrally" to industrial strategy. DfE argued that Government is "totally clear as a policy position" that careers advice and work experience are vital to a successful economy.¹⁸³ We were unable to obtain BEIS's perspective, as that Department declined to contribute to our inquiry.

64. We heard wide support for integrating the Government's aims on work experience and careers support with its wider economic vision. Witnesses emphasised that the benefits of work experience go beyond helping individual young people build skills and attributes that are attractive to employers. Work experience also contributes to developing an appropriately-skilled workforce.¹⁸⁴ EEF explained that the success or failure of key strategies to address skills gaps—such as the T Level programmes—depend on creating and sustaining student demand. Unless students can be helped to see STEM careers as viable, attractive options, skills gaps will persist because students will not take up these opportunities. EEF told us:¹⁸⁵

178 HM Government, [Industrial strategy: building a Britain fit for the future](#), December 2017, p.10

179 HM Government, [Industrial strategy: building a Britain fit for the future](#), December 2017, p.6

180 HM Government, [Industrial strategy: building a Britain fit for the future](#), December 2017

181 HM Government, [Industrial strategy: building a Britain fit for the future](#), December 2017, p.94

182 DfE, [Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents](#); DfE, [Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education](#)

183 [Q327 \(Clare MacDonald\)](#)

184 Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#)), YMCA England and Wales ([BYC025](#)), EEF ([BYC042](#)), CITB ([BYC051](#)), Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#)), Westminster Council ([BYC031](#)), Staffordshire Youth Union ([BYC037](#)), Manor High School ([BYC006](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)), Step up to Serve ([BYC019](#))

185 EEF ([BYC042](#)). See also: Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#)), YMCA England and Wales ([BYC025](#)), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)), CITB ([BYC051](#))

To generate this demand, manufacturers want young people to be exposed to STEM subjects and the workings of the manufacturing industry through programmes like work experience from an earlier age. Only by encouraging young people to undertake work experience programmes and engage with employers can young people be inspired to consider a career in STEM, thereby increasing the pool of available candidates to manufacturers and helping to reduce the skills gap recognised in the Government’s Industrial Strategy.

The Institution for Engineering and Technology highlighted similar concerns. They explained that existing weaknesses and gaps around skills are likely to worsen, as STEM employers face an “engineering shortfall in the next decade and [. . .] uncertainty around skills following Brexit”. The need to produce “home grown” STEM workers will therefore only become more pressing.¹⁸⁶ Ensuring a wide, accessible range of work opportunities are available could be an important first step in creating the demand amongst young people that is necessary to enable this.

65. Despite agreeing with the Government’s broad thinking, witnesses repeatedly challenged the notion that work experience already plays a central role in industrial strategy. We heard repeatedly that work experience—and parallels such as volunteering and social action programmes—are not sufficiently integrated with industrial strategy.¹⁸⁷ Ashley Hodges, Executive Director at Speakers for Schools, a charity, told us that “there are lots of mentions of T-levels and the use of a schools strategy to look at numeracy and literacy”. However, she “could not find any mention of work experience in the industrial strategy”, concluding that “it is massively overlooked”.¹⁸⁸ London Councils and Youth Employment UK both told us that the extent of integration of work experience in the Government’s industrial strategy is in the form of T-level and other vocational placements. Both believed this was an excessively narrow characterisation of what “work experience” should be.¹⁸⁹ London Councils’ Yolande Burgess explained:¹⁹⁰

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.

66. The Government claims that work experience is central to its industrial strategy. But the businesses, young people, educators and providers that we heard from perceived otherwise. The strategy focuses on work experience as traditional vocational placements. We heard repeatedly that work experience is so much more than this, encompassing volunteering and broader contact with employers. DfE is itself emphatic that placements with employers cannot and should not be the only option for young

186 Institution for Engineering and Technology, [Press release: student work experience is the solution to engineering skills gap, say employers](#), September 2016

187 [Q270 \(Bhavina Bharkhada, Robert Burley, Ashley Hodges\)](#), [Q236 \(Yolande Burgess and Lauren Mistry\)](#)

188 [Q270 \(Ashley Hodges\)](#)

189 [Q236 \(Yolande Burgess and Lauren Mistry\)](#)

190 [Q236 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#)

people. At best, BEIS’s perspective fails to mirror DfE’s on what is needed to equip young people in the future world of work. BEIS’s decision not to provide evidence our inquiry does nothing to reassure us that both Departments are pulling in the same direction over the importance of work experience to a highly-skilled, future-proof economy.

Improving the availability of placements

67. The Department for Education’s Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) focuses on what drives employer decisions on recruiting and developing employees.¹⁹¹ Its findings suggest that employers view relevant experience of work as important. 65% of employers said this was a critical or significant factor when taking on a new recruit.¹⁹² Moreover, young peoples’ formal skills training—for example, via qualifications or training in specific industries—does not negate the need for experience of work for most employers.¹⁹³ The report stresses that:¹⁹⁴

Even among young people looking for their first job, employers place great emphasis on prior experience of the working world, so the range of work experience opportunities open to young individuals is also important.

Despite the importance employers place on experience of work by employers, only a minority offer work experience placements. 30% of those surveyed had offered work experience to someone who was in education in the preceding 12 months.¹⁹⁵ An even smaller minority offered work experience other than placements. Just 10% of establishments offered “work inspiration” activities to students, including mentoring, holding site visits and visiting educational institutions to talk with students about careers.¹⁹⁶

68. Overall data on which employers provide, and do not provide, work experience conceals considerable differences between industry sectors. For example, while just 15% of construction employers offered work experience in 2016, 74% of education employers had done so (See Figure 4, below).¹⁹⁷ There are also differences by company size. Larger employers offer more placements per business, and are more likely to offer placements overall. 70% of businesses with over one hundred employees had offered a placement in the preceding 12 months, compared to just 22% of those with between two and four employees.¹⁹⁸

191 Department for Education, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017

192 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.13

193 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.36

194 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.40

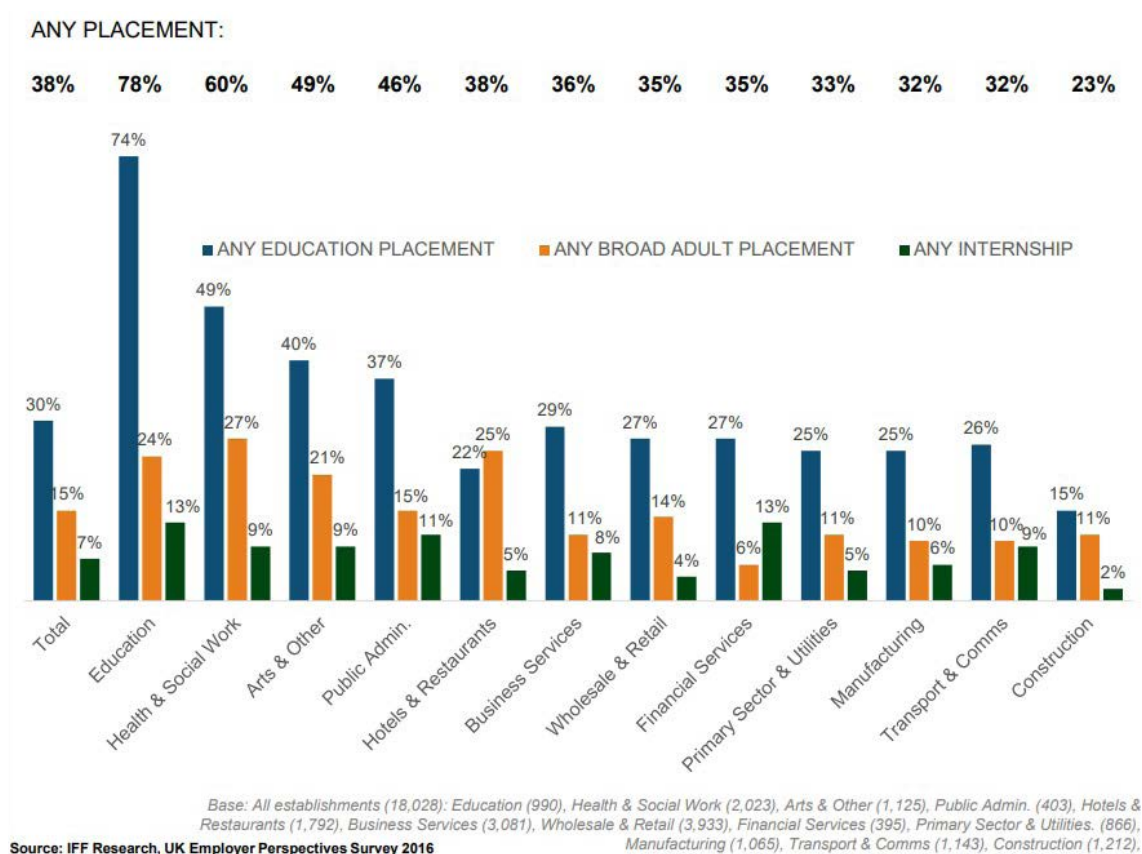
195 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.13

196 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.68

197 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.62

198 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, p.60

Figure 4: Work experience placements offered in the last 12 months, by sector



Source: DfE Employer Perspectives Survey

69. These differences affect the placements that young people are able to access. Those interested in particular industries can struggle to access placements—in turn, affecting the pipeline of young people who have an interest and understanding of specific industries. The Construction Industry Training Board told us, for example, that work experience is one of the key ways that the industry attracts new recruits.¹⁹⁹ The Employer Perspectives Survey also notes it is one of the sectors that values relevant work experience most highly. Yet construction is the sector least likely offer placements.²⁰⁰ There is also an important geographic angle. Those young people in local economies dominated by SMEs can find it difficult to access a placement at all, or can face prohibitive travel costs in doing so.²⁰¹ Sarah Horner of the Learning and Work Institute suggested this is a particular problem for young people in rural areas that are often dominated by small business.²⁰²

70. There are several reasons, often varying by business size and sector, why businesses may not offer placements (see Figure 5).²⁰³ The smallest businesses were more likely to report that their businesses were not structured in such a way as to enable them to provide work experience. They may have felt they had no suitable roles for young people, or that

199 CITB (BYC051)

200 CITB (BYC051), DfE, *Employer perspectives survey 2016*, June 2017, p.62

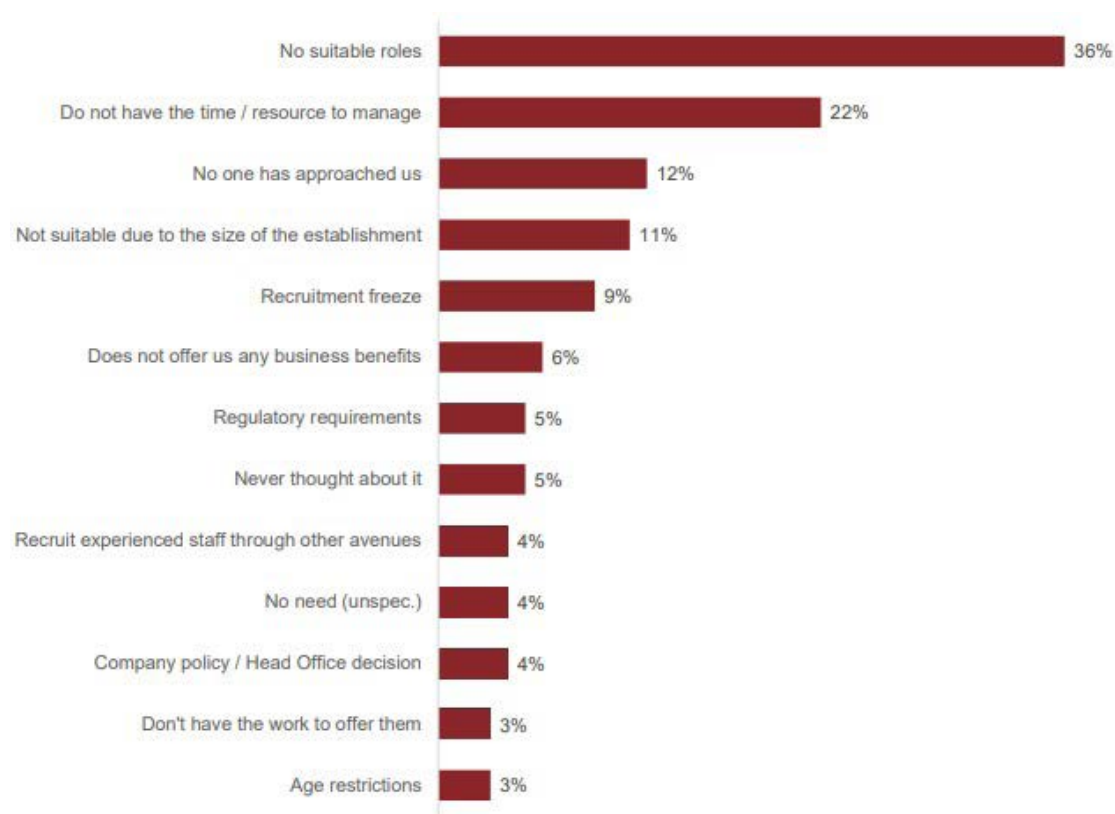
201 DfE (BYC032), Q239 (Sarah Horner)

202 Q239 (Sarah Horner)

203 DfE, *Employer perspectives survey 2016*, June 2017, p.73

the size of their business prohibited them from taking someone on. Larger businesses were more likely to cite regulatory or health and safety concerns about taking on a young person, or company policy.²⁰⁴

Figure 5: Most common reasons for not offering work experience in the last 12 months



Base: all establishments offering no work experience in the last 12 months (8,512)

Source: DfE Employer Perspectives Survey

71. We heard suggestions for how these barriers to employers offering placements, and to young people accessing them, could be overcome. These centred on improved communication with businesses on the benefits of offering work experience, and improved support and guidance on what to offer and how.²⁰⁵ They included recognising that many of the barriers employers cite to offering placements are “to a degree, perceived”, rather than actual.²⁰⁶ Concerns about regulatory, health and safety and company policy that are common in larger employers are often a matter of perception or inflexibility, rather than concrete barriers.²⁰⁷ Again, witnesses called for clearer communication and support for employers to help them identify which barriers could “with a bit more flexibility”, be removed.²⁰⁸ We also heard about very small businesses that do offer high quality work experience despite limited resources (see Box 4, The Brokerage). This suggests it is very

204 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), June 2017, pp.71–72

205 See, for example, London Councils ([BYC020](#)), Ambitious about Autism ([BYC0022](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#)), Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC0300](#)), Westminster City Council ([BYC031](#)), Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#)), [Q85–86 \(Melissa Lawrence\)](#), [Q228 \(Sarah Horner\)](#)

206 DfE, [Employer perspectives survey 2016](#), p.70

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid., p.73. See also [Q228 \(Lauren Mistry, Yolande Burgess, Sarah Horner and Rachel Saunders\)](#), [Q70 \(Kate McGoey\)](#)

much possible for them to do so, given the right communication and support.²⁰⁹ Professor Holman, for example, told us it would be a “rich field” to investigate how small businesses could be given a clear, tailored “framework [...] to provide high-quality work experience”. He suggested it “may well be that this is something for the Careers & Enterprise Company to look at”.²¹⁰

Box 4: Work experience at The Brokerage

The Brokerage is a small City of London-based charity that aims to improve social mobility amongst young people in the City and surrounding areas. It helps disadvantaged students from to access the opportunities available in the City—particularly in finance and professional services—including through work experience placements.

As well as helping young people access external placements with employers, the Brokerage also offers its own, internal work experience placements. Students receive a one week placement involving time in office supporting the Brokerage team on existing projects, visits to employers who offer placements, and time with each team member, including the Executive Director. This allows students to understand the range of different jobs that they could do and what they would involve. The Brokerage offers placements to around six students per year, aiming to focus on good quality placements rather than quantity. They reimburse students for travel and lunch.

72. There are also more immediate steps that Government could take to help young people avail themselves of opportunities. We heard strong support for extending eligibility for travel bursaries to help young people with the costs of attending placements—whether paid direct to young people, or reimbursed to businesses.²¹¹ This would be particularly helpful for young people from rural areas, who may have a narrower range of local placements to choose from.²¹² Mike Davies, Deputy Director for T Level Development at the Department for Education, told us that the Department is “making bursary funding available for that particular issue”.²¹³ The Department subsequently clarified that this referred to Bursary Funding which is intended to support 16 to 19 year olds to access industry placements. It expects this funding to increase as T-levels roll out.²¹⁴

73. Some industries and businesses already see the value of work experience, and consistently offer valuable placements. But this is far from universal. The Department for Education and for Businesses, Energy and Industrial Strategy must work together to help businesses understand the importance of offering work experience, give practical support to do so, and encourage and support young people into placements.

74. We recommend BEIS and DfE co-convene a joint stakeholder group on work experience and industrial strategy. This should include representatives from local government, LEPs, business, education, and young people themselves. Its purpose should be to consider how businesses in key sectors that do not currently offer work experience—especially small businesses—can be encouraged to do so. We also recommend that DfE

209 [Q70 \(Kate McGoey\)](#), [Q69 \(Melissa Lawrence\)](#), [Q149 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

210 [Q149 \(Professor John Holman\)](#)

211 [Q141 \(Katy Hampshire\)](#), [Q176 \(Clare Walsh\)](#), [Q239 \(Sarah Horner\)](#), [Q245 \(Lauren Mistry\)](#), [Q27 \(Beatrice Cerkez\)](#), [Q60 \(Taiwo Afolabi\)](#), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#)), Westminster City Council ([BYC031](#))

212 [Department for Education \(BYC032\)](#), [Q239 \(Sarah Horner\)](#)

213 [Q354 \(Mike Davies\)](#)

214 [Department for Education \(BYC055\)](#)

ask the Careers & Enterprise Company to develop a framework and toolkit for SMEs to help them deliver high quality placements, and to consider how this might best be promoted to them alongside existing resources.

75. Some of the barriers to young people accessing work experience are more easily addressed. The Department recognises that travel costs are often prohibitive barrier—especially for young people in rural areas. But its funding to address this is limited to 16–19 year olds. This provides nothing for young people who want to explore the options open to them before they make important post-16 choices. *We recommend the Department extend eligibility for travel bursary funding to young people aged under the age of 16. The Department must also publicise the fund and ensure that information on eligibility and how to apply is communicated clearly to young people and those supporting them. As a first step, it should commit to communicating this via schools, colleges and to young people directly via the redesigned National Careers Service website.*

Quality and benchmarking

76. We repeatedly heard that improved, accessible and relevant resources for businesses to develop work experience could go a long way to helping employers offer placements.²¹⁵ They could also help to reassure young people and educators that the experience they receive will be useful and high quality.²¹⁶ We explored a number of different ideas, including:

- a) A national “kite mark” scheme or badge for quality work experience. For example, Melissa Lawrence, Chief Executive of The Brokerage, cited the “Fair Train” organisation. This provides employers with resources to develop their provision, and potentially with a nationally-recognised accreditation.²¹⁷
- b) A standard, minimum framework that employers offering work experience should meet. Business in the Community’s Rachel Saunders, suggested this might include factors such as ensuring fair access and promoting social mobility.²¹⁸ Lauren Mistry, Operations Director at Youth Employment UK, told us it was possible to do this in a way that does not put off small and medium businesses.²¹⁹
- c) Broader guidelines on what “good quality work experience” is. Some witnesses, such as Learning and Work Institute’s Sarah Horner, were concerned that a minimum standard would put off smaller employers. However, we heard this does not negate a need for clearer guidance that can be adapted by different sized employers.²²⁰

77. A further option suggested to us was a benchmarking scheme. This could incorporate some of the features of a kite mark or standard, offering a clear steer and guidance on what

215 London Councils ([BYC020](#)), Ambitious about Autism ([BYC0022](#)), Jill Collins ([BYC023](#)), Plymouth City Council ([BYC026](#)), Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC0300](#)), Westminster City Council ([BYC031](#)), Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#)), [Q85–86 \(Melissa Lawrence\)](#), [Q228 \(Sarah Horner\)](#), [Q228 \(Lauren Mistry, Yolande Burgess, Sarah Horner and Rachel Saunders\)](#), [Q70 \(Kate McGoey\)](#)

216 [Q210 \(Eileen Gallagher\)](#), [Q252 \(Yolande Burgess\)](#), [Q253 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#)

217 [Q85–86 \(Melissa Lawrence\)](#). See also: [Q116 \(James Lloyd\)](#), [Q254 \(Lauren Mistry\)](#), [Q265 \(Dr Deirdre Hughes\)](#)

218 [Q231 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#). See also: Canal and River Trust ([BYC038](#))

219 [Q229 and Q231 \(Lauren Mistry\)](#)

220 [Q239 \(Sarah Horner\)](#). See also: [Q274 \(Steve Radley\)](#), [Q277 \(Ashley Hodges\)](#), [Q228 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#), Youth Employment UK ([BYC016](#))

“good quality” looks like in delivering work experience. It might also, however, offer a more flexible approach than those options.²²¹ Importantly, as Rachel Saunders explained, benchmarking is not simply about ticking boxes or working in isolation. The key benefit of benchmarking is that it is about “being measured against your peers, so you have a sense of where you are in relation to others”.²²² As such, she argued, “it is about continuing, moving forward and improving”. She drew a parallel with BITC’s own “tracker tool” in which “the important thing is that you can never reach the top; you should always be moving forward and improving”.²²³ There are also clear parallels with the approach of the Careers & Enterprise Company, whose “Compass” tool allows schools and college to assess their ongoing progress in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks.²²⁴

78. Designing good quality work experience can be daunting for businesses. Young people, too, can find it difficult to navigate the array of options open—and to have confidence that their experience will be high quality. Government should avoid replicating the multiple resources that already exist to support both groups—but it could also do more to drive improvement.

79. We recommend the Department develop a national benchmarking scheme for quality work experience, with a focus on in-sector comparisons and continual improvement. It should set out timescales for doing so in response to our report. We further recommend that, once implemented, Government ensures all central Departments are signed up to the scheme, and publishes an annual report on their progress in meeting the benchmarks.

80. Work experience already provides some young people with valuable insights and opportunities in the world of work. Many businesses and industries recognise the value that offering placements can provide. Government has made some steps forward, but there is so much more to do. We urge Government to maintain and capitalise on the momentum it has created, moving forward towards fully realising the potential of work experience for all young people.

221 [Q250 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#), [Q251 \(Sarah Horner\)](#), [Q252–253 \(Yolande Burgess and Rachel Saunders\)](#)

222 [Q250 \(Rachel Saunders\)](#)

223 *Ibid.*

224 See Careers & Enterprise Company ([BYC030](#)). <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/compass-benchmark-tool>

Conclusions and recommendations

Who participates in work experience?

1. Work experience can be a helpful lever for improving social mobility. It can also offer vital protection against the risks of unemployment in later life. But access to work experience opportunities is unequal. Who you are, where you live, and where you are educated influences the quality, type and variety of work experience you are likely to access. Successive reforms to career guidance and work experience provision in schools have done little to redress the balance. (Paragraph 12)

Getting the most from work experience

2. “Work experience” is not just about work placements. We commend the Department for Education for recognising the importance of young people gaining a range of experiences of work, fulfilling different purposes and individual needs. It is vital, however, that young people have access to the full range of these experiences if they are to derive the full benefits of work experience: from understanding the opportunities on offer to developing the skills and experience that employers want. (Paragraph 16)
3. Young people want their work experience to be meaningful: whether broadening their understanding of jobs they might do, gaining transferrable skills, or being able to demonstrate “real work” skills to prospective employers. The quality of individual placements and encounters matters in this respect. But it is not all that matters. To really make the most of work experience young people need support to prepare, reflect and build their understanding of work and careers. The Department’s intention to fund a universal, digital Enterprise Passport scheme could have been an important level in helping them to do. Its decision to withdraw funding for the Passport is regrettable. *We recommend the Department reinstate funding for the Enterprise Passport, engaging with the Careers & Enterprise Company to agree a clear and timely plan for its delivery.* (Paragraph 20)

Finding and accessing work experience

4. England lacks the comprehensive, Government-backed online provision for work experience and careers guidance that is available in many other countries. The redevelopment of the National Careers Service website offered a clear chance to address this gap and provide young people with a valuable service—but the Department has chosen not to take it. This is a missed opportunity. (Paragraph 28)
5. *We recommended the Department dedicate a section of the redesigned National Careers Service website to work experience, pulling together and signposting towards existing high-quality resources and services. We further recommend the Department work with young people to co-produce this resource, and that it involves them as ambassadors in promoting the site on an ongoing basis once it is launched.* (Paragraph 29)

What schools should deliver

6. The Department has great faith in the Careers & Enterprise Company driving real improvements in careers provision and access to work experience in schools across England. The Department's co-ordinated approach to this task, including the framework provided by the Gatsby Benchmarks, is both very welcome and much-needed. But previous attempts to drive up quality and consistency of provision have not resulted in high quality support for all young people. The Department must ensure the Careers & Enterprise Company does not replicate the mistakes of the past. (Paragraph 37)
7. *In light of the public money invested in it, we recommend that the Department ensures the Careers & Enterprise Company is held to account for its provision. The Department should instruct Ofsted to inspect the quality of Careers & Enterprise Company-funded provision, as it does for the National Careers Service. We also recommend that the Department commission a full, independent review of the Careers & Enterprise Company's impact in schools and colleges. This should take into account its impact on improving access to work experience for the most disadvantaged young people.* (Paragraph 38)

Work experience at Key Stage 4

8. The Government has replaced the mandatory duty for schools to offer work experience at Key Stage 4 with an obligation for schools to fulfil the Gatsby Benchmarks. These require schools to ensure young people have a range of "work experiences" from age 11 to 19. The reasoning behind this decision is sound. The Benchmarks enable schools to design flexible programmes that suit individual young people, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach. But with this comes a risk of replicating old inequalities and disadvantages in the types of experiences that young people are offered and take up. The Department must be vigilant to avoid repeating old errors. It has little means of understanding and mapping the activities that individual young people fulfil in respect of the Benchmarks. It must ensure those students who could benefit most from substantive work placements are consistently able to access them. Better opportunities must not be the preserve of more privileged students. (Paragraph 45)
9. *We recommend the Department update the statutory guidance to schools and colleges to include a "right to be offered" a substantive work placement at Key Stage 4. We also recommend it work with a representative sample of schools to track the activities that students fulfil in respect of Benchmarks 5 and 6 with reference to pupil characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, disability and socioeconomic background) and type of experience. The Department should publish this data and use it to produce an annual "health check" on young peoples' parity of access to work experience.* (Paragraph 46)

Leadership

10. Strong leadership is critical in building strong careers programmes and in ensuring access to work experience. The Department's plans to boost the status of career professionals and its commitment to funding training and producing resources for

those staff is very welcome. But it could go further in ensuring that their professional training remains at the cutting edge, emphasising the importance of challenging young people to look at a broad range of career options that they may not have otherwise considered. *We recommend that the Department amend its guidance on Career Leaders to require them to hold a professional qualification, be registered with the appropriate professional body, and fulfil any associated Continuing Professional Development requirements.* (Paragraph 50)

Funding and technical education

11. Without dedicated funding, there is a risk schools will continue to see careers education and work experience as a “luxury”. This has potential implications for the Government’s ambitions on vocational education. If young people struggle to get appropriate experience of industry before they make their post-16 choices, then they may also struggle to understand the appeal of T Levels and Apprenticeships. The Department is clear that the Apprenticeship Levy needs a period of stability in order to bed in. But it should be open to using funds raised by the Levy flexibly and creatively to ensure it achieves those ambitions. *The Department should conduct research on the links between work experience and choosing technical education at 16+, with a view to diverting some funding into schools to support work experience provision. The Department should set out plans and timescales for this research in response to our report.* (Paragraph 53)

Primary schools

12. Starting to build up young peoples’ understanding and awareness of work early can help combat stereotypes and encourage realistic ambitions. DfE’s recognition of this fact is encouraging. It must make sure that its investment in understanding “what works” is put to good use and continue to drive forward best practice in support young people—of all ages. *The Department should, as soon as possible alongside its existing research, produce guidance for primary schools to deliver careers education and exposure to employers.* (Paragraph 57)

Engaging parents

13. Parents and carers remain, by some distance, the sources young people are most likely to go to for advice on work and careers. We wholeheartedly support the Department’s intention to understand better how it can help parents and carers support their children with work experience and careers advice more widely. Parents/carers and professional advice are two sides of the same coin: one should not be viewed as a substitute for building up the other. *We recommend that alongside its work on improving careers advice in secondary and primary schools, the Department commissions research on “what works” in engaging parents at both secondary and primary level.* (Paragraph 61)

Work experience and the Government's industrial strategy

14. The Government claims that work experience is central to its industrial strategy. But the businesses, young people, educators and providers that we heard from perceived otherwise. The strategy focuses on work experience as traditional vocational placements. We heard repeatedly that work experience is so much more than this, encompassing volunteering and broader contact with employers. DfE itself is itself emphatic that placements with employers cannot and should not be the only option for young people. At best, BEIS's perspective fails to mirror DfE's on what is needed to equip young people in the future world of work. BEIS's decision not to provide evidence our inquiry does nothing to reassure us that both Departments are pulling in the same direction over the importance of work experience to a highly-skilled, future-proof economy. (Paragraph 66)

Improving the availability of placements

15. Some industries and businesses already see the value of work experience, and consistently offer valuable placements. But this is far from universal. The Department for Education and for Businesses, Energy and Industrial Strategy must work together to help businesses understand the importance of offering work experience, give practical support to do so, and encourage and support young people into placements. (Paragraph 73)
16. *We recommend BEIS and DfE co-convene a joint stakeholder group on work experience and industrial strategy. This should include representatives from local government, LEPs, business, education, and young people themselves. Its purpose should be to consider how businesses in key sectors that do not currently offer work experience—especially small businesses—can be encouraged to do so. We also recommend that DfE ask the Careers & Enterprise Company to develop a framework and toolkit for SMEs to help them deliver high quality placements, and to consider how this might best be promoted to them alongside existing resources.* (Paragraph 74)
17. Some of the barriers to young people accessing work experience are more easily addressed. The Department recognises that travel costs are often prohibitive barrier—especially for young people in rural areas. But its funding to address this is limited to 16–19 year olds. This provides nothing for young people who want to explore the options open to them before they make important post-16 choices. *We recommend the Department extend eligibility for travel bursary funding to young people aged under the age of 16. The Department must also publicise the fund and ensure that information on eligibility and how to apply is communicated clearly to young people and those supporting them. As a first step, it should commit to communicating this via schools, colleges and to young people directly via the redesigned National Careers Service website.* (Paragraph 75)

Quality and benchmarking

18. Designing good quality work experience can be daunting for businesses. Young people, too, can find it difficult to navigate the array of options open—and to have

confidence that their experience will be high quality. Government should avoid replicating the multiple resources that already exist to support both groups—but it could also do more to drive improvement. (Paragraph 78)

19. *We recommend the Department develop a national benchmarking scheme for quality work experience, with a focus on in-sector comparisons and continual improvement. It should set out timescales for doing so in response to our report. We further recommend that, once implemented, Government ensures all central Departments are signed up to the scheme, and publishes an annual report on their progress in meeting the benchmarks. We recommend the Department develop a national benchmarking scheme for quality work experience, with a focus on in-sector comparisons and continual improvement. It should set out timescales for doing so in response to our report. We further recommend that, once implemented, Government ensures all central Departments are signed up to the scheme, and publishes an annual report on their progress in meeting the benchmarks.* Work experience already provides some young people with valuable insights and opportunities in the world of work. Many businesses and industries recognise the value that offering placements can provide. Government has made some steps forward, but there is so much more to do. We urge Government to maintain and capitalise on the momentum it has created, moving forward towards fully realising the potential of work experience for all young people. (Paragraph 79)

Witnesses

Friday 6 July, Morning session

Question number

Taiwo Afolabi, vInspired; **Tom Hawkins**, Student, Foxes Academy; **Beatrice Cerkez**, Member of Westminster Youth Council; **Callum Kelly**, Student, Robert Clack School, Business in the Community; and **Bethanie Mortenson**, Member of the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority

[Q1–65](#)

Melissa Lawrence, Head of Programmes, The Brokerage Citylink; **James Lloyd**, Resourcing Manager, Transport for London; and **Kate McGoey**, Senior Programme Manager, Barclays Lifeskills

[Q66–133](#)

Friday 6 July, Afternoon session

Professor Sir John Holman, Emeritus Professor of Science Education, University of York and advisor to the Gatsby Foundation on career values; **Dr Julie Moote**, Research Associate, Kings College London; and **Katy Hampshire**, Director of Operations and Programmes, Education and Employers

[Q134–172](#)

Clare Walsh, Partnership Engagement, Foxes Academy; **Sarah Yong**, Head of Government, Careers and Enterprise Company; **Anna Howard**, Programme Manager, Inspire Education Business Partnership; and **Eileen Gallagher**, Apprenticeship Development Officer, Westminster City Council

[Q173–211](#)

Friday 13 July, Morning session

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

[Q212–254](#)

Dr Deirdre Hughes OBE, Director, DHM & Associates Ltd

[Q255–267](#)

Bhavina Bharkhada, Education and Skills Policy Advisor, 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

[Q268–305](#)

Friday 13 July, Afternoon session

Mike Davies, Deputy Director for Technical Education Policy, Department for Education; and **Clare McDonald**, Deputy Director for Careers and Basic Skills, Department for Education

[Q306–398](#)

List of published written evidence

The following written evidence can be viewed on the [British Youth Council's website](#).

- 1 [Cameron Wood](#)
- 2 [Young Person's Network](#)
- 3 [Toni Paxford](#)
- 4 [Rotherham Youth Cabinet](#)
- 5 [Edge Foundation](#)
- 6 [Manor High School, Leicester](#)
- 7 [Dr Julie Moote & Professor Louise Archer](#)
- 8 [Hounslow Youth Council](#)
- 9 [Borough of Poole](#)
- 10 [North East Lincolnshire Council](#)
- 11 [Sutton Trust](#)
- 12 [City of Wolverhampton Youth Council](#)
- 13 [Royal Society For Blind Children](#)
- 14 [Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority](#)
- 15 [Elena Ewence](#)
- 16 [Youth Employment UK](#)
- 17 [Plymouth Youth Parliament](#)
- 18 [Business in the Community](#)
- 19 [Step Up to Serve](#)
- 20 [London Councils](#)
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- 22 [Ambitious about Autism](#)
- 23 [Jill Collins](#)
- 24 [Langley College](#)
- 25 [YMCA England and Wales](#)
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- 31 [Westminster City Council](#)
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- 33 [Trafford Youth Cabinet](#)
- 34 [John Benger](#)
- 35 [Elevation Networks](#)

- 36 [Speakers for Schools](#)
- 37 [Staffordshire Youth Union](#)
- 38 [The Canal & River Trust](#)
- 39 [James Gath](#)
- 40 [Inspire](#)
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- 47 [Liverpool Compact](#)
- 48 [Theo Paphitis](#)
- 49 [Construction Industry Training Board](#)
- 50 [Erin Scullin](#)
- 51 [Laith Abbas](#)
- 52 [Transport for London](#)

About the British Youth Council

The British Youth Council works to ensure that every young person is empowered to create social and political change. As the national youth council of the UK, the British Youth Council brings young people together to find their voice and use it to improve the lives of young people. We work with others to amplify young people's voices to create an environment in which young people's views are valued, sought and acted upon.

We are youth led

Young people are agents of change and will always be at the forefront of our work. As a youth-led charity, young people are our leadership through our government structures. They lead and shape our work, and we support them to define their own action for change. We champion youth leadership across all sections of society, evidencing the benefits of engaging young people in decision making and delivering and supporting that to happen.

We are collaborative

We actively seek to collaborate with others to make positive change happen. We seek to work with relevant partners to add value to our campaigns and activities, and to be more creative in our approach to making change happen with and for young people. We recognise the skills, knowledge and experience of young people, volunteers, staff and partners, and strive to achieve more by maximising the opportunities that collaboration provides.

We are inclusive

We respect and value diversity and act in a way that includes all. We ensure that all our activities are inclusive, recognising the needs of young people across different communities, and bring young people and partners together to learn from each other.

For more information about the British Youth Council visit www.byc.org.uk, email info@byc.org.uk or call 0207 250 8374.

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