

Work Experience (general)

Q1. What are the expectations for delivering work experience for learners across all settings, including schools, colleges and specialist provision, and how should approaches be adapted to reflect different contexts and learner needs?

A. The flexibility of the guidance enables delivery to be designed to suit the cohort. The [equalex](#) framework and progressive approaches have been tested through pilots across a wide range of settings and learner needs including mainstream, alternative provision and specialist settings.

Q2. What proportion of work experience should take place in a workplace versus within an educational setting?

A. The policy intention is that experiences should be delivered in the workplace where possible to give young people as much exposure to a genuine working environment. Education leaders should use professional judgement and context to apply the guidance appropriately.

Q3. What insights have been drawn from historical models of work experience, and how are these shaping the development of work experience today?

A. Recent comprehensive analysis of the impact of work experience has been published by [Education & Employers](#). Policy is being developed to be as flexible as possible to enable schools to deliver programmes that are impactful for each cohort. The work experience guarantee is being informed by multiple insights and research points.

Q4. How is the role of the Careers Leader being strengthened to ensure consistent, high-quality employer engagement in all schools and colleges?

A. Statutory guidance is clear that “every institution should appoint an appropriately trained Careers Leader to develop and direct the careers programme, in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks.” It also emphasises that Careers Leaders should have the skills, commitment, senior leadership support, protected time, and sufficient budget to carry out the role effectively.

To support this, The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) provides a comprehensive suite of online training, resources, and practical support for Careers Leaders. This includes building a shared and consistent understanding of the role through tools such as the [Understanding the Role of a Careers Leader](#) guide. In addition, continuing professional development for Careers Leaders is already available through the [Careers & Enterprise Digital Academy](#), supporting practitioners to strengthen their practice aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks. Careers Hubs are supported to implement national, quality assured frameworks which maintains place-based flexibilities, responding to need. Whilst driving high quality employer engagement.

Q5. How can Careers Leaders effectively engage senior leadership teams to prioritise careers provision and work experience?

- A. The most effective SLT engagement tool is the [Careers Impact System](#). The maturity model, used via the internal leadership review provides structured statements and questions that are intentionally linked to wider-setting improvement and development. These provide a structured opportunity to engage with and influence senior leaders. Completing the [internal leadership review](#) in isolation as Careers Leader dilutes the potential and proven impact of this tool.

Q6. What support is available for Multi-Academy Trusts operating across multiple Careers Hub areas?

- A. Support is institutional, as in DfE commission the Careers Hub system based on institutional engagement. Careers Hubs are partnerships between CEC and Combined and Local Authorities. [Locate your nearest Careers Hub](#) to find out more about how they can support you.
- However, in addition to this Trusts and Central Strategic Careers Leaders are recommended to join and engage strategically with the [CEC national Trust Community of Improvement](#). This provides enhanced data tools and support for [Central Strategic Careers Leaders](#). Trusts and schools are responsible for using their own professional judgement to interpret the guidance and develop appropriate programmes which respond to both institutional and trust need and contexts.

Q7. What support is available to address practical barriers such as transport and cost?

- A. DfE colleagues are still taking insight and working through opportunities for future support. The Aspiring Pathways programme (for eligible alternative provision institutions) has a student support element to remove barriers to work experience that will be administered locally through Careers Hubs.

Q8. How are Careers Leaders building confidence in what good looks like to ensure work experience is meaningful in their context?

- A. All work experience should be planned with intent and supported through learning outcomes as described in the Gatsby Benchmark 6 meaningful definition. This then ensures the experience is relevant and purposeful for all learners involved

Work Experience (specialist settings, alternative provision and supporting learners with additional needs)

Q9. How does the updated guidance apply across specialist settings, including special schools, specialist FE colleges (16+), and alternative provision, where workplace experiences may need to be adapted or delivered differently?

A. The updated guidance for work experience applies to pre-16 learners in all settings. The pilots have tested suitability across all settings and the progressive model allows you to use your professional judgement to build a programme that is appropriate to your learners.

Q10. What does high-quality, meaningful work experience look like for learners with SEND, including those with complex or sensory needs, particularly where traditional placements are not appropriate or feasible?

A. As part of the equalex pilots the framework was tested in specialist settings to ensure relevance for all learners. The [equalex for SEND](#) resources help you to see what this can look like in practice.

Q11. How can careers provision and work experience be effectively planned for learners who attend multiple settings (e.g. mainstream and alternative provision), including those in short-term placements?

A. Programmes should be planned by the host school and where appropriate in collaboration with the alternative provision. The work experience guarantee is applicable across the whole of young person's secondary learning journey. Professional judgement should determine which setting the learner accesses workplace experiences from as part of their planned provision. Maintained alternative provision settings (as defined by DfE) are also currently eligible for additional support for work experience through the Aspiring Pathways programme via every Careers Hub.

Q12. What are the expectations for organising and coordinating work experience for all learners, including those in mainstream settings, where readiness, behaviour, or safety considerations mean access to employer placements may need to be carefully supported or staged?

A. The intent of the policy is that every learner can access workplace experiences. The progressive and flexible nature of the policy enables barriers to employability to be removed as an intentional part of programme design. Pilots have shown impact in enabling access to the workplace for learners who need the most support. CEC will share examples of programmes that have been built to progressively support learners with additional barriers.

Q13. Is there an update on the additional funding for Alternative Provision for work experience?

A. The Aspiring Pathways programme will offer additional support for the work experience guarantee to maintained alternative provision institutions (as defined by DfE). Support will be administered through Careers Hubs and they will contact, if not already, settings to discuss involvement. Other alternative provision institutions will be supported by the wider Careers Hub activity.

Q14. How are Careers Hubs working with partners to help improve access to careers and transition support for young people most at risk of becoming NEET?

A. Careers Hubs are supporting schools to make effective use of the [OnTrack+](#) feature to identify learners most at risk of becoming NEET. Whole-school work experience programme planning should respond to the needs of identified learners. Careers Hubs can support with OnTrack+ training and help to develop interventions. Careers Hubs may also work via regional partnerships to support young people most at risk of becoming NEET.

Employer engagement to support work experience

Q15. How can schools and colleges strengthen employer partnerships, ensuring all learners including those in younger year groups (e.g. KS3) can access meaningful workplace experiences?

A. Careers Hubs have a critical role in helping education settings translate the new statutory guidance into consistent local practice. By acting as strategic convenors, Careers Hubs can strengthen employer partnerships, coordinate local networks, and support institutions to adopt a progressive approach to work experience from workplace experiences in Key Stage 3 through to high-quality placements in Key Stage 4. Through effective use of the Gatsby Benchmarks, Employer Standards, Careers Impact System and equalex framework, Careers Hubs can help ensure employer engagement is sustainable, inclusive and equitable, enabling every young person, regardless of background or setting, to benefit from meaningful workplace experiences.

The [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) enables senior leaders to take a strategic view of employer engagement, ensuring it is aligned with curriculum intent and reaches all learners, including those in KS3.

Q16. What training and support is available for employers and Enterprise Advisers to support high-quality careers provision and work experience?

A. Enterprise Advisers and wider business volunteers receive a local induction and ongoing support from their Careers Hub. This covers their role, the different ways they can support high-quality careers education and modern work experience, and how to work effectively with schools, specialist settings and colleges. CEC complements this local training through national webinars, guidance and the sharing of effective practice. CEC is also working with a number of Careers Hubs to test different models for Enterprise Adviser involvement in modern work experience, with learning from these pilots being shared from September 2026. Employers of all sizes can access a range of practical resources to support high quality employer engagement. Through the [Employer Standards](#), employers can access the 'Providing Meaningful Opportunities guide'. Additional [guidance and resources](#) are available on CEC's website to help employers get started or further develop their programmes, aligned to equalex a national outcomes framework.

Q17. Is there funding or support available to help employers facilitate meaningful workplace experiences

A. There is no funding presently available. Employer support is delivered through Careers Hubs and the national CEC team. National resources for employers can be found on the [CEC website](#).