

Links with employers can be invaluable in raising young people's aspirations, and the charity Inspiring the Future can help schools and colleges make those connections, says **Charlotte Lightman**.

WIDEN THEIR horizons



Close links with employers can make a significant difference to schools, colleges and young people by introducing students to the working world and to the skills and qualities that will make them employable in the future.

To be effective, engagement with employers needs dedication in terms of time, planning and support from all levels in schools and colleges. But employer links can be developed quickly and easily without the need to spend lots of money.

Inspiring the Future, run by the charity Education and Employers, helps schools and colleges to develop employer links. It offers a free, easy-to-use service for recruiting volunteers from all jobs and sectors to give students first-hand career insights into a wide range of jobs and careers and to find out about the different routes into them.

Designed in consultation with teachers and business leaders and supported by ASCL, a simple request is made of volunteers: will they agree to visit a state school near to where they live or work once a year and spend an hour talking with young people about their job?

Since Inspiring the Future was launched in 2012, schools have connected pupils with employee volunteers more than a million times. More than 30,000 volunteers and over 10,000 teachers and careers advisers have already registered for free.

Teachers and staff sign up via the website www.inspiringthefuture.

org and are able to contact all locally registered volunteers directly by email. The volunteers are rated by schools staff and 96% of teachers who have held an Inspiring the Future event would recommend the service to a colleague.

How teachers can use Inspiring the Future

- Career insight talks from archaeologists to zoologists
- Career speed networking with students and volunteers interacting in small groups
- CV help and mock interviews for jobs, apprenticeships or university
- Subject talks, for example, a banker speaking in a maths lesson
- Careers fairs with volunteers staffing stands to share insights into their jobs and organisations

Schools and colleges can also search for volunteers by their specialisms, enabling them to identify easily those who use maths, science or a modern foreign language (MFL) in their job. Volunteers can also now connect with their old schools, opening up access to alumni.

Inspiring the Future also runs different campaigns with volunteers speaking about key issues and themes:

Inspiring Women focuses on support for girls and young women. In this campaign, thousands of women give up an hour a year, going into schools

and colleges to talk about the jobs they do and their career paths, challenging gender stereotyping and enabling women and girls to connect, sending powerful messages around economic empowerment, and encouraging women to achieve their goals.

Inspiring Apprentices brings apprenticeship volunteers into schools and colleges to help students understand the range of apprenticeship options that exist. Since 2013, they have connected with more than 300,000 young people.

One way that schools and colleges are using volunteers is as part of a well planned Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) programme embedded in the curriculum (and that can help to meet the needs of the Ofsted framework and other statutory duties). Education and Employers has worked with teaching staff on a guide to help schools and colleges understand how to do this effectively. The guide is available for free, along with a range of resources and best-practice guides developed with teachers, on the Inspiring the Future website.

What teachers say

- "Listening to employers talk about their job role to help young people understand the world of work is crucial" – Sara Cookney, Careers Adviser, at Salendine Nook Academy Trust, Huddersfield, who has hosted a series of career-insight talks from volunteers.



- “Inspiring the Future provided strong messages from adults other than their teachers or parents. It gives our young people ideas about different careers” – Alison Browning, Challenge Coordinator, at Varndean School, Brighton, who did a Year 10 enrichment day.

Inspiring Governance

In partnership with the National Governors' Association (NGA) and supported by the Department for Education (DfE), Inspiring Governance is a new free service that enables schools and colleges to find appropriately skilled volunteers interested in becoming school governors or trustees.

Volunteers come from a wide range of professions and sectors with skills and expertise in areas such as finance, human resources, law, and marketing. Recruiting boards can search easily and quickly for the skills and experience they need. To sign up for the free service, go to www.inspiringgovernance.org

Top tips

Education and Employers Research works closely with the Inspiring the Future team and scholars from around the world to improve understanding of the potential impact of employer engagement and how it can be made to happen as efficiently, effectively and equitably as possible.

Six things the research tells us:

1 A lot of a little goes a long way when it comes to employer engagement
Young adults who have greater levels of contact with employers while at school are significantly less likely to

become NEET (not in employment, education or training) and can expect, when in full-time employment, to earn up to 18% more than peers who had no such workplace exposure. Where young people learn about the working world through authentic interactions with people whose views they feel they can trust, they have much to gain.

2 Start young and make them think about what they've learnt
The effects of employer engagement can be witnessed most powerfully in influencing attitudes and assumptions that young people begin forming from early childhood: do girls really become engineers or boys work in childcare? What are the real-world uses of maths and English? Delivering workplace experiences in the context of thoughtful careers provision makes it easier for young people to make the most of lessons learned.

3 Pupils should do lots of different things over their school lives
Teachers with first-hand experience of a wide range of employer engagement activities (careers events, enterprise days, work experience, workplace visits, mentoring and so on) argue that different ones are more effective in achieving different outcomes. They see mentoring, for example, as more effective with borderline or disengaged pupils and work experience as especially helpful in improving understanding of the working world.

4 Schools and colleges recognise that young people are not all the same
Where a pupil is from (socially, economically, and geographically)

influences their access to, and interaction with, employer engagement opportunities, especially work experience. Some young people need more help than others need from schools and colleges in accessing experiences of real value that relate to their emerging ambitions.

5 Young people's view of the labour market is like seeing the world through Mr Magoo glasses – they need help to get perspective
Ask teenagers where their aspirations lie and one-third are chasing just ten jobs. Most young people have an incredibly poor understanding of the labour market and their career aspirations have nothing in common with projected labour market demand.

With teenage part-time working rapidly dying out, schools and colleges are more important than ever in helping them to explore the breadth of the working world – and employers need to step up to help publicise their own opportunities if they are going to compete for the attention of the next generation.

6 They don't know what they don't know – sometimes a little coercion is right and proper
Assumptions shape attitudes and attitudes guide decisions and the assumptions that teenagers have about jobs and careers are often very deeply held. Career speed networking is a perfect way to challenge often unspoken assumptions and build confidence through speaking and listening.

Further information

School-Mediated Employer Engagement and Labour Market Outcomes for Young Adults: Wage premia, NEET outcomes and career confidence
<http://tinyurl.com/zzua03k>

Nothing in Common: The career aspirations of young Britons mapped against projected labour market demand 2010–2020
<http://tinyurl.com/zq6jtm3>



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