



# What does our research show?

The UK labour market is increasingly **complex, competitive and changing**.

Technological and workplace change has meant that the choices that students make (what and where to study and the value of qualifications and experience) have become much more difficult. On leaving education, young people face greater competition for work from older workers delaying retirement and graduates taking jobs once the preserve for non-graduates. UK and international research has made a compelling case that the quality and quantity of employer engagement experienced by young people while in school and college makes a significant difference to how well they do in the world of work in their twenties.

## It's who you meet

Through employer engagement young people often gain access to new and trustworthy information and also useful contacts. In this way, a high number of relatively brief employer engagements play a significant role in helping young people to explore, clarify and confirm career choices. The result is to make it easier for them to navigate the increasingly difficult move from school to sustained, successful employment, and so compete more effectively and by making more informed decisions.

The research team at **Education and Employers\*** work closely with scholars from around the world to improve understanding of the impacts of employer engagement and how it can be made to happen as efficiently, effectively and equitably as possible.

## Advice for practice from the research:

### More is more

Young adults who have **4 or more** contacts with employers whilst at school are less likely to become NEET, and can expect, when in full-time employment to earn more than peers who had no such exposure.

Schools and colleges should give students the opportunity to take part in as many career development activities as possible.

### Mix it up

Teachers with first-hand experience of a wide range of employer engagement activities argue that different activities are more effective in achieving different outcomes. Different people respond to different work related activities in different ways. Effective provision involves use of a range of different activities – with an emphasis on real-world experience.

### Start young

It is evidenced that the early years of a child's life are a key time in the formation of their attitudes and expectations. Children start to rule career options in or out at an early age and girls and boys hold stereotypical views about male and female careers by age 7. One way of tackling is to make sure they meet professionals of both genders who work in a variety of roles and sectors.

### Keep it real

Research suggests, and both students and practitioners agree that it matters who delivers information within careers events. It is important that the people providing information to pupils about jobs and careers can draw on personal, first-hand experience of the same professions.

### Level the playing field

Where a pupil is from (socially, economically, geographically) influences their access to, and interaction with, employers and the wider business community.

Schools should do more to facilitate these encounters and help young people from a variety of backgrounds accumulate more social capital and improve their understanding of their own capabilities and skills.

### Listen to young people

Students earn more in later life, and are less likely to become NEET when they find employer engagement activities helpful. Schools could maximise these impacts by listening to students needs in terms of knowledge, information and experiences in the transition to the world of work. Careers programmes are most beneficial when they are designed considering what young people would find helpful to hear about.

### Prepare

Schools and colleges can expect greater impacts when they contextualise and prepare young people for they engage with the world of work. Students consistently find employer engagement activities more useful if they have had time to think about their wider ambitions and prepare themselves.

### Be coercive

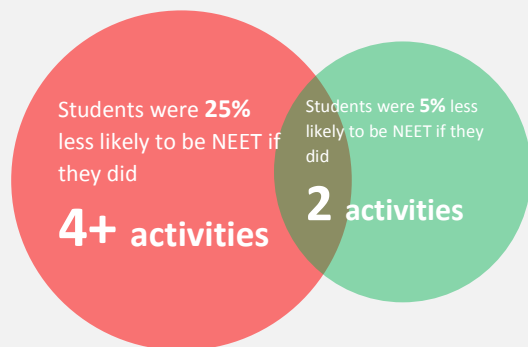
Young people don't know what they don't know. Assumptions shape attitudes and attitudes guide decisions and the assumptions teenagers have about jobs are often very deeply held. Exposure to people from different roles and backgrounds is a perfect way to challenge often unspoken assumptions, and build confidence through speaking and listening.

\* Education and Employers run a number of programmes including Inspiring the Future <http://www.inspiringthefuture.org/> which connects schools and colleges with the world of work.

# Evidence of employer engagement impact

## NEET outcomes

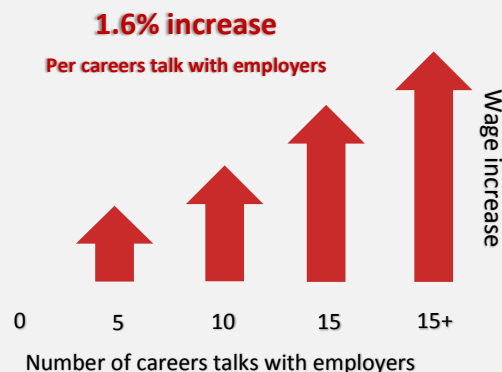
There is strong evidence that students who took part in work related learning activities while they were in school were less likely to become NEET (not in employment, education or training). Additionally, this study found that higher volume of employer engagement activities results in higher wages.



Source: Education and Employers 2014 report: *School-mediated employer engagement and labour market outcomes for young adults: wage premia, NEET outcomes and career confidence*

## Wage premiums

Our evidence shows that young people who had participated in a careers talk with employers could expect, on average, a 1.6% wage premium compared to their peers who did not participate.



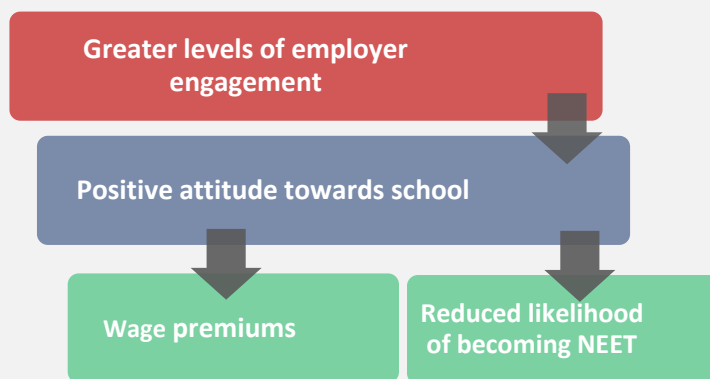
Source: Education and Employers 2016 report: *Career education that works: An economic analysis using the British Cohort Study*

## Attitudes towards school

In an international comparison we provided evidence that there is a strong relationship between participation in different types of employer engagement activities and forming more positive attitudes towards schooling.

In another study which tracked thousands of young people through adolescence to adulthood, we found that **teenagers, who agreed that 'school was a waste of time' earned on average 16% less at age 26 than those who disagreed**. Additionally, **teenagers who agreed that 'school is a waste of time for me' were two times more likely to be NEET than those who disagreed**.

We conclude from these studies that employer engagement can be a catalyst in helping young people understand the value of education, which is translated into better labour market outcomes once young people are in employment.



Source: Education and Employers 2016 report: *The impact of career development activities on student attitudes towards school utility: an analysis of data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*



## Why does it work?

Young people expressed positive experiences from their teenage employer engagement and they felt the benefits falls into one of three different areas: *human capital* (employability skills or qualifications), *social capital* (creating new opportunities through personal connections), *cultural capital* (how one feels about themselves including motivation and ambition). Although they might gain limited human capital as a result of their encounters with employers, it is argued that they changed the way they felt about themselves and their aspirations (a form of cultural capital) and this stems from new personal interactions (social capital).

Employer engagement gives young people the opportunity to expand their effective personal networks, allowing them access to larger numbers of professionals with more varied types of experience. These personal interactions provide young people with the chance to access '**non-redundant, trusted information**' about the availability of economic opportunities and their suitability for a potential job.

Source: Education and Employers 2012 report: *It's who you meet: Why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults*

## How to find us:



[www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/](http://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/) Visit our unique (free) research library to access research papers and resources relevant to anyone interested in helping young people make the most of their employer contacts.



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