

New research finds work experience can reduce the odds of young people becoming NEET by 80%, yet disadvantaged teenagers can't access it

A new report by the education charity Education and Employers has found that **young people who experience the highest levels of employer engagement before the age of 16 have 80% lower odds of becoming NEET** (not in education, employment or training) compared to those who had the least experience.

They also have much better odds of having a clear post-GCSE plan, getting onto the course/training they wanted, and feeling what they did at 16-18 was useful in the long-term.

The landmark report, *Work Experience: Past, Present and Future* is the most detailed analysis of global research on the impact of employer engagement. Funded by the DHL UK Foundation, it draws on findings from three original surveys of young adults aged 19 to 26, teachers, small employers, and 47 international OECD studies.

The report also found that **access to high-quality work experience placements and meaningful employer encounters is often limited to those with well-connected families.**

Parents and teachers will be all too aware of the scramble to find work placements for teenagers when they're in Year 10 or 11 at school. The report found that for **81% of young people, work placements are arranged by them or their families.** More than three quarters of school staff (78%) said family connections are the main reason some young people benefit more than others. These inequalities in access are reinforced by a combination of geographic isolation, economic disadvantage, travel costs, limited employer capacity to engage, and insufficient resources in schools.

The study also examines careers provision for young people and raises concerns about the **Government-run National Careers Service which** Nick Chambers, CEO of Education and Employers says: "**is not fit for purpose**".

Whilst the Government has recently announced a new policy requiring all students under 16 to complete ten days of workplace experience, the study found that many teachers were very concerned about its deliverability. The report includes an analysis of Government departments and discovered only 22% of Government departments mention work experience on their own websites. The Department for Education, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office do not appear to offer work experience placements to under-16s.

At the moment:

- only 58% of KS4 pupils complete any work experience
- 94% of teachers said job shadowing would be difficult or very difficult to organise
- 81% of teachers said workplace visits are difficult or very difficult to arrange
- employers are willing to engage, but state limited resources, bureaucracy and competing demands as significant barriers
- schools face a shortage of high-quality placements, competition from other schools, rising travel costs and difficulties releasing staff

The report argues that **without proper infrastructure and support the Government's guarantee of 10 days' work experience risks becoming a tick-box exercise** which will fail to deliver what our young people need and deserve.

The Rt Hon. Alan Milburn in his review *Young People and Work* said that having nearly one million young people being NEET was a crisis and risked a 'lost generation'. The new evidence from Education and Employers **proves work experience before the age of 16 plays a key role in reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET** and details a number of options on how this might be delivered going forward.

Nick Chambers, CEO of Education and Employers says:

*"The Government's ambition is absolutely right. But the evidence in this report and the surveys of young people, schools and employers suggest there is a real risk that **without a proper infrastructure and funding this policy will simply advantage the advantaged**, widening the social mobility gap further. If most work experience placements continue to be found mainly through family connections, the best opportunities will inevitably go to the most well-connected young people. Good work experience should not depend on who your parents know or where you happen to live.*

"For more than 60 years, successive governments have tried to reinvent work experience, yet many of the same barriers remain.

*"This report shows just how powerful meaningful employer engagement can be in reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET. **Government needs to lead this from the top.** If Government is serious about tackling the country's NEET crisis, it must bring together the leaders of education and employer organisations to create a structured system that gives every young person access to high-quality experiences of the world of work, regardless of their background."*

For interviews, expert comment, case studies and access to the report, contact:

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Notes to editors:

- Work Experience: Past, Present and Future is published by Education and Employers on 25 June 2026
- The report is funded by the DHL UK Foundation
- The study draws on original surveys of young adults, teachers and employers, analysis of 47 OECD longitudinal studies, and extensive review of national and international evidence
- Employer engagement includes activities such as work experience, workplace visits and employer talks
- The report examines ways previous governments have approached this issue and includes unpublished financial analysis on spending across Whitehall on the last infrastructure that existed when it was a statutory requirement.
- Education and Employers runs Inspiring the Future, a service connecting schools with volunteer role models from the world of work in order to inspire and develop the ambitions of young people and reduce NEET. www.inspiringthefuture.org
- Over 13,500 schools and colleges and almost 100,000 volunteers are registered with Inspiring the Future, facilitating more than 7 million interactions between young people and employers.

A way to take action

Chambers calls for people with experience of the world of work to volunteer with Inspiring the Future as one way to help address the inequalities highlighted in the report. "By sharing their experiences, volunteer role models help young people discover careers they may never have considered, challenge stereotypes and give them confidence to make informed decisions about their future. Those small conversations can have a lasting impact."

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0.01am THURSDAY 25th JUNE 2026

Report and supporting information will be published here:

