

WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMMES

Briefing paper for the Department for
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INTRODUCTION

Work experience¹ is widely viewed as an effective way to prepare young people and adults for employment. The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey showed two thirds (66%) of employers rate work experience as being of critical or significant value, ranking higher than academic skills². The survey results also indicated that an estimated 4 million work experience opportunities were offered in the UK in that year.

A range of programmes are currently run across government, whereby employers are expected to provide work experience opportunities, including those for young people at school, college students, university students and unemployed adults. Most recently, the Government outlined intentions to reform technical education in England³ and the availability of work placements (lasting 1-3 months) for learners on college-based technical routes will be central to the successful delivery of the reforms. This will represent a major change to the current post-16 system where work placements of a significant length are not commonplace and increase the expectation on employers to provide these opportunities.

This briefing paper for DfE provides an overview of programmes through which government currently seeks employer engagement in offering work experience/placement opportunities. It also describes the barriers and challenges to offering work experience opportunities, the benefits to employers of offering work experience opportunities, and outlines potential options for increasing the volume of work experience opportunities. The paper aims to inform a government approach to providing a coordinated support offer to employers.

The paper has been developed following a rapid desk research exercise, and draws on recent primary research completed by L&W on behalf of DfE on the implementation of work placements in technical education.

¹ Please note the terms 'work experience' and 'work placement' are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

² IFF Research (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK results*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373769/14.11.11_EPS_2014_-_Main_Report_full_V2.pdf

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf

WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMMES

The table below provides an overview of current programmes that seek to engage employers to provide work experience/placements.

[Data Sets used are from published data freely available on Government and other websites. Any policy implied /or statistical data - is not attributable or reflects in any way current or past Government policy thinking or data sets.]

Type of provision	Description	Timescale	Target group	Scale
School				
Work experience.	In response to The Wolf Review of Vocational Education, the government removed the statutory duty for schools to provide all 14-16 year olds with work-related learning. Schools remain free to determine if and how work experience will be provided as part of the curriculum and some schools continue to make work experience compulsory.	Statutory duty removed 2012/13.	School students aged 14-16 years.	<p>A recent DfE study found that 90% of schools and colleges surveyed offered work experience to years 10 and 11 (with 88% take up)⁴. The average length for this age group is 8 days.</p> <p>The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey found that 20% of employers had offered work experience to school students in the previous 12 months, typically lasting no more than 3 weeks.</p>

⁴ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

Post-16 education				
College-based technical education.	In response to the Sainsbury Review of Technical Education, the government has outlined plans requiring students following college-based technical education routes to undertake a work placement. This will be a structured work placement of 1-3 months with an employer in an industry relevant to the student's study programme. Successful completion of this work placement will be a requirement of completing the qualification.	To be fully implemented September 2019. Piloting commences 2017/18.	Post-16 students completing college-based technical education qualifications.	<p>The DfE is working on the assumption that 180,000 placements will be needed each year.</p> <p>The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey found that 12% of employers offered work experience to FE students (including sixth form), lasting an average of 1 month.</p>
Traineeships	Designed for young people who are motivated to get a job but lack the required skills and experience. The programme incorporates English and maths delivery, as well as work experience with an employer.	In place since 2014.	Young people aged 16-24 years, not yet ready to access an apprenticeship or other employment.	<p>In 2015/ 2016 19,400 young people started a traineeship, with 11,600 of these aged 16-19 (just over 1% of all young people aged 16-19 years).</p> <p>The government has been investing in traineeship growth and more employers will need to offer these.</p>

16-19 study programmes	Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes and all students are expected to undertake work experience or some form of work-related training as part of their study programme 'non-qualification activity'. This applies to academic, vocational and mixed pathways.	Introduced in 2013.	Young people aged 16-19.	The end of year review of 16-19 study programmes for 2014/15 found an increase in the proportion of students in the full-time funding bands and an increase in the proportion of students participating in work experience as part of their programme.
Supported internships.	<p>Another strand of study programmes, the supported internships programme is designed to support young people with complex needs who need a higher level of support to access employment. It normally lasts for a year and includes an unpaid work experience placement of at least six months.</p> <p>The Post-16 Skills Plan explains that during a transition year, all young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan should undertake a supported internship, which includes an extended work placement, unless there is a good reason not to do so.</p>	Supported internships currently in place. Transition year to be in place September 2020.	Young people with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan up to the age of 25.	A recent DfE study found that 63% of schools and colleges surveyed offered work-related activities to students with special educational needs (SEND), although this figure is higher amongst colleges (82%) ⁵ . Of these schools and colleges, 26% offer supported internships. These last an average of 30 days, but not necessarily at only one site.

⁵ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

Higher education				
'Sandwich' courses.	<p>Thin sandwich course: Typically includes several shorter work-experience placements during the course of a three-year degree.</p> <p>Thick sandwich course: Typically part of a four-year degree. A year-long, full-time work experience placement follows the first two years of the degree programme.</p>		For undergraduate students enrolled on specific courses. Across sectors, although more dominant in science, engineering, technology or business/management.	<p>10% of full-time first degree students studied on sandwich courses in 2012/13 (126,710 out of 1,312,335)⁶.</p> <p>The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey found that 12% of employers offered work experience to university students, lasting as long as 2-3 months.</p>
Graduate Talent Pool (GTP).	<p>A government initiative designed to help new and recent graduates gain real work experience. GTP is a website (https://graduatetalentpoolsearch.direct.gov.uk/gtp/index) through which employers can advertise paid internships for free. The intention is to make it easier for graduates to find, apply and start internships.</p>	Launched in 2009.	New graduates.	Evaluation of GTP estimated that approximately 1,440 graduates undertook internships within 6 months of registering ⁷ .

⁶ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/03-11-2014/sandwich-day>

⁷ Mellors-Bourne, R. and Day, E. (2011) *Evaluation of the Graduate Talent Pool Internships Scheme*. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Employment support⁸				
Sector-based work academies.	Sector-based work academies are available in England and Scotland to support adults who are ready for work and receiving benefits to secure employment. A sector-based academy can last up to six weeks and have three main components: pre-employment training; work experience placement; and a guaranteed job interview.	In place since 2011.	Adults claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance (if in the Work-Related Activity Group).	Between December 2015 and November 2016, there were 37,530 starts, a 38% decrease on the previous year ⁹ .
Work experience	This programme aims to provide experience of a working environment. It normally lasts for 2-8 weeks and participants are typically expected to work between 25 and 30 hours per week.	Launched in 2011.	People aged 16-24 years, who are receiving Jobseeker's Allowance.	Between December 2015 and November 2016, there were 141,980 work experience starts, a 4% decrease on the previous year ¹⁰ .
Work together	Volunteering opportunities with local organisations.		People who are unemployed and looking for work.	Participation data not available.
Work Trials	This is an opportunity for employees to try out a job, and for employers to trial a potential employee. A work trial must be 16 hours or more a week for up to 30 days. Work trials are voluntary for participants.		People who are unemployed and looking for work.	Participation data not available.

⁸ The 2014 Employer Skills Survey found that 14% of employers offered work experience to adults outside of education provision, with 9% taking part in work trials and 6% of placements targeted at unemployed adults. These employers tended to offer placements in larger numbers than other placement types, with the average number in a 12 month period being 4 for work trials and 5 for employment support programmes (compared to 1-2 per employer for individuals in education).

⁹ DWP (2017) *Employment Schemes Official Statistics* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/593410/employment-schemes-statistics-to-november-2016.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

The evidence reviewed highlights a range of barriers and challenges to offering work placements, including:

Lack of employer resource: The 2016 CBI Education and Skills Survey found that just over a quarter (27%) of employer respondents viewed involvement with schools and colleges as too onerous¹¹. This supports the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey, which found that a quarter (26%) of employers who did not offer work placements identified time and resource to manage the process as a barrier¹². This was particularly the case amongst third sector organisations, and those in the Business and Other Services sector.

A study of employer perceptions of DWP's work experience and sector-based academies programmes found that only 7% of employers who took someone for work experience thought that there had been a great deal of work to arrange and provide supervision and 35% thought that there had been a fair amount of work¹³. The perceived workload was higher for those employers involved with a sector-based work academy, with 18% saying it created a great deal of work and 36% reporting a fair amount of work. The research also found that the perceived burden increased with the number of placements taken on.

Lack of appropriate roles: Nearly two fifths (38%) of employers responding to the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey who had not provided any work experience or related activities, said that this was due to a lack of suitable roles in their organisation. This was particularly the case amongst smaller organisations, as well as those in the Primary and Utility and Construction sectors.

Readiness/suitability of candidates: Nearly half of FE providers and a quarter of employers responding to the call for evidence on work placements in technical education cited learner readiness for the workplace as a challenge¹⁴. Research on employer perceptions of sector-based academies and DWP's work experience programme also found that employers' main concern about involvement related to the suitability of the candidate (31% for work experience and 24% for sector-based work academies)¹⁵. Specific concerns related to the punctuality and attitude of individuals, as well as whether the individuals were motivated or mandated to complete the work placement. Of those employers who were dissatisfied with the quality of candidates matched to them, 51% cited attitude as a reason.

Safeguarding: Contributions to the call for evidence on work placements in technical education highlighted challenges related to health and safety and other related practical considerations, such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, insurance and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)¹⁶. Organising these for each individual can take considerable staff resource and lead-in time. Learning providers explained that these can be especially challenging where a student is working with a sole trader, particularly if they are working at a different location every day (for example plumbing or construction). Health and safety may also be a greater barrier for work placements in the land-based sector, which carry significant operational dangers and risks, and it is generally difficult to find sufficient safe external placements that match the quality and industry standards applied to college

¹¹ CBI (2016) *The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016*.

¹² IFF Research (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK results*

¹³ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

¹⁴ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

¹⁵ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

¹⁶ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

commercial activity. This means that learners often receive a better experience via an in-house placement.

Other evidence suggests that these practical aspects of setting up a work placement can be off-putting to some employers. For example, the evaluation of the work experience placement trials concluded that 'bureaucracy was considered to be discouraging some employers who in principle were sympathetic to providing placement'¹⁷. Where work placements were run most successfully, learning providers took on tasks such as risk assessments and DBS checks. As might be expected, larger businesses found these elements of offering work placements less burdensome. NatCen's research on work experience found that colleges take responsibility for health and safety checks, whereas schools often contract an external agency to do this¹⁸.

Insufficient provider resources: The work placements call for evidence also identified a need for additional resources for FE providers, which would be used to further invest in staff capacity for sourcing, securing and managing work placements, as well as subsidising travel costs¹⁹. The majority of schools and colleges have a central system for organising and administering work placements²⁰, and the importance of the work placement coordinator role was highlighted by the evaluation of the work experience placement trials. A review of collaboration of business and universities in 2012 also commented on the barriers that universities experience when increasing placement opportunities and that further investment needed to be made to enable institutions to effectively build and maintain relationships with employers, which is 'not cost free'²¹.

Too little guidance: The 2016 CBI Education and Skills Survey identified a lack of guidance and support on how to make work experience placements worthwhile for young people as a barrier for employers²². The survey results also indicated that some employers perceive schools and colleges as uncertain about how businesses can help their students. The evaluation of work experience placement trials also made recommendations for additional guidance for employers²³. Specifically, that it should include myth-busting information about employer requirements, for example what additional (if any) insurance they would need, or whether members of their workforce would need to hold a valid DBS check.

Differences between employers: The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey shows that larger employers (with 100+ staff) were more likely to offer work experience opportunities, with 79% of them doing this²⁴. This compares to 28% of businesses with less than five employees offering placements. Differences are also clear between sectors: two thirds (66%) of Non-Market Services employers offered work placements, compared to 21% of employers in Construction, 26% in Manufacturing and 27% in Primary and Utilities sectors. Around two thirds of public or third sector organisations were also more likely to provide work experience, with approximately one third of private organisations offering placements.

¹⁷ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

¹⁸ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

¹⁹ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

²⁰ A recent study of work experience found that 83% of schools and colleges have a centralised team responsible for coordinating work-related activity, although 51% of colleges also involve teaching staff in the organisation of work placements (compared to 32 per cent of schools including a sixth form and 29 per cent of schools excluding a sixth form). NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

²¹ Wilson, T. (2012) *A Review of Business-University Collaboration*.

²² CBI (2016) *The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016*.

²³ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

²⁴ IFF Research (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK results*

Stakeholders contributing to the call for evidence on work placements highlighted challenges relating to engaging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who can make up the majority of employers in some areas, particularly rural or small town locations²⁵. SMEs can often be reticent to take on a student out of concerns that they do not have the capacity or resource to look after them appropriately, along with issues such as lone working and prohibitive costs of insurance. Providers specifically raised challenges in sourcing placements in the creative sector as these tended to be sole traders. Another recent study also found that finding work placements in the creative and media sector was difficult, as well as the construction, manufacturing and health sectors²⁶.

Rurality: The call for evidence on work placements in technical education identified challenges that providers and students in rural locations have experienced when delivering/ undertaking work placements²⁷. Suitable public transport may not be available or affordable, restricting placement options, and long journeys can also have implications for health and safety. Specific challenges were highlighted in relation to placements sourced by land-based colleges, where employers tend not to be on an accessible transport network. Some colleges have tried to overcome this by offering in-house placements, although there is concern about whether this meets qualification and Ofsted requirements.

Location was also identified as a potential barrier in NatCen's recent study of work experience offered by schools and colleges²⁸. Rural locations can make it difficult to find a suitable work experience placement due to the limited number of employers in particular sectors, the cost and availability of public transport.

Students with SEND: The research undertaken by NatCen also showed that an average of 63% of schools and colleges offered work-related activities to years 10-13 students with SEND (82% of colleges; 58% of schools with sixth forms; 66% of schools without sixth forms)²⁹. Of these, only one quarter (26%) offered supported internships. The case study findings revealed that 'work experience placements were far less likely to be offered to young people with SEND' and that a challenge for work placement coordinators sourcing opportunities for these students was identifying an appropriate/ accessible sector and occupation³⁰. The lead-in time needed for setting up a placement for students with SEND was also highlighted by respondents to the call for evidence on work placements in technical education.

Timetabling: The 2016 CBI Education and Skills Survey found that some employers perceive school timetabling to be a barrier to offering work experience³¹. Indeed, timetabling was also a challenge identified by FE providers responding to the work placements call for evidence, particularly in relation to young people resitting GCSE maths and English qualifications. There was a consensus among providers that timetabling is already complicated, and will become increasingly so under the new proposals. At present, students tend to be in the classroom for three days per week and it is considered that it will be a challenge to fit work placements and all the required classroom time into this structure. Added to this, many learners are also taking maths and English qualifications to ensure that they meet basic standards. These are often rigidly timetabled outside of the learners' area of

²⁵ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

²⁶ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

²⁷ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

²⁸ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

²⁹ NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.33

³¹ CBI (2016) *The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016*.

specialism, therefore creating a difficulty when it comes to arranging a placement. Providers, through their current experience, know that not all employers can be flexible about when they can take students (especially some of the larger employers who are also the most likely to host repeat placements) and are concerned that this problem will increase due to the volume of placements they will be expected to find.

Volume of opportunities: The primary challenge identified by FE providers responding to the call for evidence on work placements was that the supply of opportunities does not meet demand. A recent DfE study on work experience in schools and colleges found that, of those institutions that did not offer placements to all students in years 10-13, approximately one quarter cited 'a lack of available opportunities' as the reason³².

Employer fatigue: FE providers responding to the work placements call for evidence are also concerned that employers are approached to host learners from multiple programmes (including apprenticeships, traineeships, return to work schemes, school work experience, study programmes, etc). This risks them feeling overwhelmed by the demand, leading to fatigue and apathy, but can also cause confusion about the differences between the schemes. The post-16 and employment support sectors are fragmented and one employer can be approached by several providers to host learners enrolled on the same qualification, meaning that the employer could have to manage several different approaches for the same product. Other research carried out by L&W on employer capacity for engaging with technical education reform also highlighted that there is likely to be confusion amongst employers and some providers about the differences between work experience programmes³³. For example, employers may not understand the difference between work experience/placements as part of traineeships or study programmes and those that will be delivered as part of technical qualifications.

The study of employer perceptions of DWP employment support programmes also found that two thirds (67%) of employers who had heard of other schemes (such as apprenticeships) found the different schemes confusing and did not always know what was available³⁴.

Losing full-time students to employment: One outcome of a successful work placement is progression to a permanent job or an apprenticeship. While this may be a benefit to the employer and individual, some contributors to the call for evidence on work placements queried whether this would consequently register as a 'fail' against the provider. The evaluation of the work experience placement trial recommended that DfE advise colleges, schools and work-based learning providers on this issue, to clarify whether this could be recorded as a success rather than a drop-out³⁵.

EMPLOYER MOTIVATIONS AND BENEFITS

The evidence reviewed indicates that employers can experience multiple benefits as a result of supporting work experience programmes, including:

Benefits to individuals and the community: The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey concluded that employers are motivated to provide work placements for altruistic reasons, with 54%

³² NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Department for Education.

³³ IFF Research and L&W (2017, unpublished) *Investigating Employer Capacity to Engage in Technical Education: Feasibility study*.

³⁴ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

³⁵ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

saying they wanted to give individuals experience and 26% citing benefits to young people³⁶. This was echoed by recent research on employer capacity for engaging in technical education reform, which found that employer motivations to engage with FE and skills providers are typically altruistic, whether triggered by an individual employee's interest or desire to 'give back' to the local community, or part of larger companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies³⁷. It is also supported by the findings of the work experience placement trials evaluation, which reported that 'financial incentives for employers were unnecessary as employers did not want them', and that employers saw work experience as contributing to their local community³⁸.

In terms of employment support programmes, research on employers' perceptions of sector-based work academies and work experience programmes found that the most common reason for getting involved in either programme 'to give young/unemployed people a chance (57% for work experience and 43% for sector-based work academies)³⁹.

Recruitment: Feedback gathered through L&W's call for evidence on work placements in technical education reflected that employers see offering work experience opportunities as an investment in their future talent pipeline⁴⁰. This is supported by the evaluation of the work experience placement trials, which found that some students secured, or were progressing towards, employment or an apprenticeship following their placement⁴¹.

The 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey found that 28% of employers cited recruitment as a motivation to offer work experience, and almost one third (31 per cent) had taken on an individual as a result of a work placement⁴². The majority (60%) of these appointments followed a work trial and only 10% of placements for school students resulted in a permanent position. A quarter (25%) of employers who had provided work experience placements as part of an employment support programme had offered permanent positions to one or more individuals. Half (51%) of the employers who took on individuals following a placement did not identify 'recruitment' as a motivation for offering these opportunities, indicating this was an unanticipated outcome.

Staff development: Employer responses to L&W's call for evidence on work placements in technical education indicated that work placements provide an opportunity for existing staff to develop their own knowledge and skills⁴³. This benefit was also identified by the evaluators of the work experience placement trials, who reported that development opportunities arose from supervision and management responsibilities⁴⁴.

Increased capacity: The evaluation of the work experience placement trials found that employers benefited from the increased capacity that individuals on work experience gave them, for example releasing staff to do other work⁴⁵. This was particularly the case amongst organisations, such as charities, that rely on volunteers. This finding is supported by research on employer perceptions of sector-based work academies and work experience, which found that 22% of employers reported they

³⁶ IFF Research (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK results*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373769/14.11.11_EPS_2014_-_Main_Report_full_V2.pdf

³⁷ IFF Research and L&W (2017, unpublished) *Investigating Employer Capacity to Engage in Technical Education: Feasibility study*.

³⁸ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education, p.9

³⁹ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

⁴⁰ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

⁴¹ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

⁴² IFF Research (2014) *Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK results*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373769/14.11.11_EPS_2014_-_Main_Report_full_V2.pdf

⁴³ Learning and Work Institute (2017, unpublished) *Work placements: A call for evidence*. Department for Education.

⁴⁴ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

⁴⁵ NFER (2013) *Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials*. Department for Education

had decided to get involved in the work experience programme to 'get additional resource at no/low extra cost' and 23% of employers became involved in sector-based work academies for the same reason⁴⁶.

OPTIONS FOR INCREASING THE VOLUME OF WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

The evidence suggests that activity aimed at increasing the number of employers who offer work experience placements – and therefore the number of opportunities – should focus on raising awareness of the associated benefits and removing barriers experienced/perceived by employers. Research on employer motivations indicates that offering financial incentives to employers is less likely to be successful.

Based on the evidence reviewed, the government may want to consider the following options:

Awareness raising activity: Ownership at a national level should be taken for awareness raising activity that seeks to engage schools, students, parents and other stakeholders about career progression routes in a holistic manner – and how work experience opportunities can support these. The Gatsby Benchmark project on effective Careers Education⁴⁷ was highlighted as good practice.

Aligned to this, awareness raising activity on work experience should be aimed at employers, individuals and families, and include significant use of social media (similar to the apprenticeships campaign, Get In Go Far⁴⁸), as well as case studies highlighting success and benefits to employers. While activities might aim to raise awareness of opportunities growth areas, such as technical education, this should be an integral part of a wider careers strategy.

Good practice guidance for employers: The evidence indicates that employers could benefit from guidance to ensure they understand the benefits of offering work experience, as well as support their understanding of the different programmes and how they might support career progression⁴⁹. Benefits to employers should include those that are philanthropic in nature, such as being able to give something back, but should also focus on business benefits and how work experience can become an integral part of their strategies, for example, recruitment and developing a talent pipeline.

The research also suggests that guidance should include practical information about setting up work placements, as some employers are discouraged from providing placements due to myths relating to insurance, DBS and health and safety requirements.

Increased investment to support schools, colleges and other learning providers: The evidence shows that in education settings, work placement coordinators are key to the success of work experience programmes. Coordinators work with employers, teachers and students to ensure a structured and systematic approach is taken to sourcing, matching, supervising and evaluating placements. For employment support programmes, this role will often be done by an employment

⁴⁶ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

⁴⁷ <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/programmes/good-career-guidance>

⁴⁸ <https://www.getingofar.gov.uk/>

⁴⁹ Respondents to the work placements call for evidence cited Fair Train's Work Experience Quality Standard (<http://www.fairtrain.org/work-experience-quality-standard>) as good practice and the Scottish Funding Council has also published guidance for colleges on their Work Placement Standard (http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GUI_SFCGD202016_WorkPlacementStandardforColleges/Work_Placement_Standard_for_Colleges.pdf).

advisor, and research suggests that employers would like greater support and communication from providers, such as Jobcentre Plus⁵⁰.

The Government should consider increased investment in learning providers and employment support services to increase their resource and capacity to deliver work experience programmes. Additional investment could contribute towards:

- Boosting the number of staff involved in coordinating work placements.
- A support programme, including staff development on engaging employers in the full range of work experience programmes, as well as continuing to provide apprenticeships.
- Digital systems to facilitate the coordination of work experience placements, including tracking information about employers and individuals' progress on placement.
- Other costs relating to work placements, for example, DBS checks, PPE, uniform/clothing, transport.

Work experience placements hub: At a local level, upscaling the number of work placements could be supported by a centralised system, accessible to both employers, schools, FE providers, HE providers and employment support providers. This 'hub' could hold details of employers, their skills gaps and potential work placement opportunities, as well as information on their insurance status, DBS checks and health and safety requirements. It could also act as a central reference point for employers who want to engage in work experience programmes, providing straightforward and clear information on the practicalities and realities of hosting placements. This would go some way to combating employer fatigue and could act as a forum for sharing best practice. It would represent an additional cost but one which would be critical to the smooth management of a significant increase in work placements.

Wilson's review of business and university collaboration also highlights the consortium model, which is designed to engage SMEs in particular⁵¹. Rather than hosting placements or internships for an extended period of time, individuals complete shorter placements with different organisations. This also requires central coordinator and likely more investment than one placement, but could support the delivery of placements in areas without employers who can accommodate longer work placements.

Provider-based placements: Where work placements are particularly challenging to source, consideration should be given as to whether some placements can be delivered using 'in house facilities'. This would offer more opportunities and flexibilities to learners, especially learners with SEND, or for those providers who are struggling to secure placements due to the local employer demographic or rural location.

⁵⁰ DWP (2013) *Employer perceptions of work experience and sector-based work academies*.

⁵¹ Wilson, T. (2012) *A Review of Business-University Collaboration*.