

# Employer Standards 2024/25

## The business case for engaging in careers education



# Executive Summary

Employers are under increasing pressure to find and retain early-career talent. Evidence from the Employer Standards now shows that high-quality engagement in careers education delivers real business value in the form of stronger talent pipelines, reduced recruitment costs and greater early careers diversity.

The Employer Standards were launched in 2023 to define good practice in employer engagement and have now been used by 1,390 organisations. The growing data sets from employer self-assessments, together with feedback on the business benefits, now offers a national evidence base at scale, and a unique insight into why employer engagement matters for businesses. This briefing outlines how:

- 1. Engaging in careers education positively impacts recruitment, workforce diversity and talent pipelines.** When careers outreach is aligned with recruitment and assessment practices, employers gain stronger, more diverse early-talent and when evaluated, clearer sight of what works.
- 2. Focusing outreach on building essential skills is a cost effective way of developing future talent.** When designed around essential skills and delivered efficiently, modern work experience gives employers a cost-effective way to develop future talent, even when internal capacity is tight.
- 3. Adopting a strategic approach leads to scale and impact.** When employers strengthen their commitment, embed internal ownership and work through strong partnerships, particularly Careers Hubs, they achieve more consistent, scalable and measurable business outcomes.

The insights below are based on 783 employer self-assessments from October 2024 to September 2025, spanning private (69%), public (22%) and third sector (9%) organisations and representing 20 Industrial sectors. 69% work with Careers Hubs (including 236 Cornerstone Employers) and 45% are from SMEs.

Full sample details, alongside more detailed analysis are provided in this [accompanying slide deck](#). Industry snapshots can be accessed [here](#).

## The impact on young people

- The UK has almost 1 million young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).
- A young person who has four or more encounters with employers is 86% less likely to be unemployed.
- Learners in the most disadvantaged schools that have the highest quality careers provision are 20% less likely to be NEET post-16 (saving Treasury £300m per annum).



**Faris, Youth  
Advisory Group  
member**

Throughout my time in secondary education and sixth form, I was lucky enough to have an extremely high standard of careers education - one of the main reasons I have made it into a highly competitive apprenticeship, in a career that I love.

Getting inside knowledge into industry through work placements, employer encounters, or just simple site/office visits have been essential for my success. These not only looked appealing to employers on my CV but at the same time, opened my eyes to a large variety of career options and next steps, post-sixth form/college.

Prior to that careers support, I often misbehaved and fell behind in lessons. However, having constant interactions with potential employers within the industry kept me focused on my goals and allowed me to visualise what I was working for and to stay motivated with my learning. Experience shows it's easy to choose a path, but without consistent support, motivation fades when visibility of pathway opportunity is far from sight.

# Insight 1 – Engaging in careers education positively impacts recruitment, workforce diversity and talent pipelines

Careers education supports key workforce development opportunities. For many employers, work experience in particular is viewed as a route into early talent acquisition, but internal alignment to secure the benefits is often missing.

- **83%** of business owners and senior leaders say that well-designed **work experience is an effective way to attract entry-level employees.**
- Yet **more than a third** say that their organisation **lacks the internal support needed to turn these experiences into long-term talent pipelines.**<sup>1</sup>

The data highlights that well-targeted careers outreach can play a significant role in recruitment, widening, diversifying and strengthening talent pipelines.

- Employers that support young people to practise application processes are **51% more likely to say that their outreach is encouraging them to apply for roles in their business.**
- Those who evaluate their outreach to understand impact are **40% more likely to report improvements in early-career recruitment.**
- Organisations that proactively engage learners with SEND or those in alternative provision settings or under-represented ethnic groups are **20% more likely to report developing new and more diverse pipelines.**



**Ian Browne, Early Careers and Youth Skills Lead, Lloyds Banking Group**

"When we first set up our outreach programmes, creating scale was a key driver. As we've grown (now at over 100,000 students each year) we've focused more on evaluation, 'How well does each activity meet its intended purpose? How does it move young people forward in their journey? How does it help us meet our business objectives?'. This helps us to refine and refocus on the things that make the most impact. The Employer Standards has been a key part of this for us, helping to guide and challenge us."

<sup>1</sup> Based on a survey of 750 business leaders conducted by The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)

## Insight 2 – Focusing outreach on building essential skills is a cost effective way of developing future talent.

The future workforce needs essential workplace skills. Employers are committed to offering skills-rich work experience, but many face operational constraints. **65% report that staff shortages reduce the time they can allocate to outreach**, and 75% say they would offer more opportunities if working with schools were easier.<sup>2</sup> There is an urgent need for models that are flexible, efficient and clearly linked to business benefits.

Analysis from the Employer Standards shows that when work experience is intentionally designed around essential workplace skills, it becomes an engine for talent development.

- Employers offering any form of workplace experience are **77% more likely to report business benefits** than those who offer none.
- Those who help young people to understand how essential skills are valued at work are **more than twice as likely to report reduced recruitment costs**.
- When young people are supported by employers to practise and progress their essential skills through work experience, the employers are **72% more likely to report improvements in employability as a result of their engagement as a business**.

Modern work experience becomes a cost-effective way to build essential workplace skills and secure a stronger return on investment for employers that fosters skills in the workforce that can flex and adapt to new and emerging priorities.



**Davinder Lotay, Managing Director, Altimex**

**"We provide a wide spectrum of workplace experiences, from short insight visits to extended placements designed to give young people a meaningful understanding of our sector. Despite being a small business with fewer than 20 employees, we open our doors to more than 20 students every year.**

**We make a deliberate effort to reach young people who often face the greatest barriers, including those in receipt of Free School Meals and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This commitment reflects our values as a business, but it also makes strong commercial sense: investing in untapped talent strengthens our workforce and our future pipeline.**

**Having delivered these opportunities for several years, we have seen first hand the impact. This work has played a pivotal role in closing skills gaps within our organisation and inspiring young people to pursue careers in our industry.**

**Our local Careers Hub has been instrumental in supporting our collaboration with schools and colleges, helping us connect with the learners who benefit most."**

<sup>2</sup> Based on a survey of 750 business leaders conducted by The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)

## Insight 3 - Adopting a strategic approach leads to scale and impact

Economic pressures continue to shape employer engagement. **71% report that rising costs limit their ability to invest in outreach**, up from 50% last year.

Employers are seeking simplicity and value from the time they invest.

The strongest returns on investment emerge where employers have a clear strategy and build sustained relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

- Long-term collaboration with the same schools, special schools, colleges or activity providers to deliver work experience makes employers **29% more likely to report that young people apply for roles in their organisation**.
- Employers who maintain a consistent engagement strategy are **56% more likely to report bringing apprentices into the business**, and
- Medium and large employers with cross-organisational careers strategies are **77% more likely to report that young people become more career ready as a result of their engagement**. Small and Micro organisations that make careers education an integral part of business plans are more than twice as likely to say young people become more career ready because of their engagement.

This reinforces the need to support employers to strengthen strategic commitment, internal ownership and long term partnerships. Careers Hubs are uniquely positioned as an efficient route to high-quality engagement. They can reduce administrative burdens, strengthen relationships with schools and other stakeholders, and ensure employer efforts lead to positive outcomes for young people. Careers system leaders, including Careers Leaders and teachers, can also help employers to engage with schools and colleges sustainably.



**Peter Caney, Head of Early Careers & Skills, BAE Systems PLC**

**“Having a careers education engagement strategy that is embedded in the business is fundamental to our talent acquisition approach. Over the past few years we have increasingly tracked how our careers education activities support our recruitment goals. We know that starting early pays off and working in partnership to maximise reach and engagement is key. We have to make STEM engaging and relatable within the classroom and we have to help young people understand the subjects, skills and pathways that help a young person access a career in our organisation and our sector.”**

## Employers who use the Standards more than once see improvements in quality

Repeat users of the tool are showing higher quality as they continue to review and improve their approach. In particular the Standards that are lowest nationally have seen some of the biggest rises – Standard 3 and Standard 5. This means that repeat assessors are now, on average, achieving (or above) on all Standards.



**Georgia Thomas,**  
**Sustainability & ESG**  
**Manager, Victrex**

"I used the results section last year to inform my work. In particular it's helped inform continuous improvement objectives in work experience and gaining feedback which has helped us to recognise inspirational colleagues who students engage the most with, raising morale for those colleagues and their teams to assure them that they are adding value. Furthermore, it's allowed us to understand the experiences that make the most positive impact on young people, so we can replicate them, and improve areas that aren't as well received. It's great to see how far things can move over the course of a year."

## Employers who repeat Standards make improvements enabling them, on average, to meet all 9 Standards, including those with national gaps

Employers who repeated the Standards score particularly highly over time against Standard 3: Evaluate and improve (+14%pts), Standard 7: Engaging over the long term (+12%pts) and Standard 5: Prepare Young people for the application processes (+10%pts)

Average scores against each Standard (%)



Source: Employer Standards – April 2023 - September 2025 (Repeated completions, N = 286)

## Proving the business case for engaging in the careers system

An increasingly compelling evidence base is emerging from employers. Those that build skills deliberately, align outreach with recruitment, and invest in stable partnerships see stronger talent pipelines, lower recruitment costs and better outcomes for young people. With both capacity constraints and growing expectations about the skills early-career hires need, the Employer Standards are telling us that high-quality careers education engagement is a strategic asset that delivers long term benefits.

## Get involved

Are you an employer who is yet to use the Employer Standards? [Learn more and access the framework](#) or go straight to our secure portal to [start your free self-assessment](#). Your local Careers Hub can support you to take forward your recommendations and connect you to schools and colleges that can help meet your business priorities. Find out more and get in touch with one of our [44 Careers Hubs across England](#).

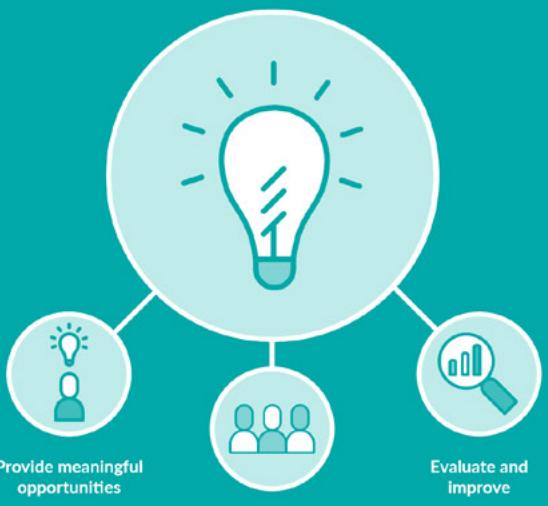
## Employers working with Careers Hubs score higher on all 9 Employer Standards

Average scores against each Standard (%)



# Employer standards for careers education

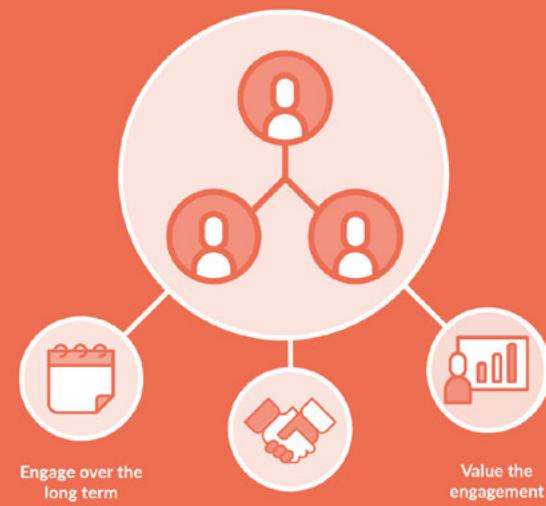
Inspire young people  
for their best next step



Prepare young people  
to be career ready



Collaborate for success



Our Impact

Our Evidence

Slide Deck