

equalex

THE CAREERS &
ENTERPRISE
COMPANY



Modern work experience – FAQs

July 2025

This document will be regularly reviewed and updated.

What is the work experience guarantee?

It is a government ambition for every young person to have access to two weeks' worth of work experience. It is not yet policy, the policy is under development and the Department for Education (DfE) will share future timelines and expectations in the future.

Where do The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) fit in?

CEC are the government's partner in delivering their ambition for work experience and are piloting a range of approaches and models supported by Careers Hubs and five Multi Academy Trusts. Learnings from pilot activities will be shared to support Careers Hubs, Education Leaders and Careers Leaders to develop their future offers. Careers Hubs are developing their approaches to ready the system for the new guarantee. Insights from these activities and pilots are being shared with the DfE.

Where can we find out more about the work experience guarantee?

The new [statutory guidance for schools, published 8th May 2025](#) sets out the future policy direction of travel. It shares some early detail into the intent of the future policy. More detail will follow as the policy develops more fully, and longer-term implementation timelines are shared. You can also find out more about the equalex high quality learning outcomes framework and approaches by visiting [Modern Work Experience | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

This feels a lot, where do we start?

As outlined in the statutory guidance, the starting point for this work is the implementation of Benchmark 6, as outlined in the updated Gatsby Benchmarks. Approaching the development of your careers programme through a lens of quality will help you and your school leaders look forward. It is important to remember this is not yet a fully developed policy, so you have some lead time to strategically plan for your context, setting and most importantly learners.

What support will be available to help us?

Careers Hubs will be your local go to for support to plan for the future ambition of all learners having access to the modern work experience. However, as the national body for careers education, CEC will be sharing a range of on-going communications, guidance, CPD opportunities and inspirational case studies to help. These will be shared via Careers Hubs but also through the [The Careers & Enterprise Academy](#), Excellence Seminars and communities of improvement so make sure you are signed up! Support will continuously evolve and develop and will be available to Careers Hubs, Schools, Education Leaders, Careers Leaders, Employers and Careers Delivery Providers. Employers should also visit the [Employer Standards](#) for further bespoke guidance and tools. The ["How to"](#) guide on the CEC Resource Directory is a good place to start!

We have so many questions, but not all the answers...

Rest assured that there are no answers to all the operational details at the moment. It is important to remember that this is a new and developing piece of work and the pilots are surfacing great practice, system wide challenges, solutions, opportunities and insight.

The best focus for your attention is:

- Implementation of the updated [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) to ensure continuous improvement of careers provision for all of your learners
- Use the [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#)
- Consider which of your learners are missing out on work experience and why, and think about how your school will approach bridging gaps and enabling equity of access to workplaces
- Map your current provision to the equalx [learning outcomes framework](#). In all of the pilots, careers and curriculum leaders have been surprised to see where the opportunities already exist within your school to access workplaces
- If your current programme of activity already supports the delivery of quality experiences underpinned by learning outcomes then you may just need to tweak the offer (unless its helpful for you to be transformative!)

Does this mean we can't do traditional work experience placements anymore?

Workplace experiences happen in many forms; traditional work experience placements are one approach which work well for many schools and many learners. The work experience guarantee as laid out in the statutory guidance is entirely flexible. It is up to you as a school to decide how you support your learners to access 10 days' worth of work experience. CEC, with Multi Academy Trust partners, is trialling ten models across all types of institutions. If you currently have a successful one-week traditional model, we encourage you to underpin it with clear learning outcomes to maximise impact for all learners. Additionally, consider how your program can expand beyond this model to support the KS3 commitment and accommodate learners who may miss out on a traditional model for various reasons. We will share information about emerging models and pilot activities in the autumn.

Will this guarantee be funded?

There is no information to share about this currently. The government are working towards a spending review and as the policy is not yet fully tested or developed, insight is informing future decision making.

What about health and safety guidance and safeguarding? Will there be anything new?

The statutory guidance points to the Keeping Children Safe in Education and to Health and Safety Executive Guidance. Stakeholders will be updated if/when changes are made. It is useful to consider when planning your future programmes for the work experience guarantee, that not all models of workplace experiences and “placements” would require the same approach as a 1:1 placement. Work is underway to support employers and schools with streamlining processes and supporting efficient solutions. DfE are also working closely with a range of stakeholders to understand and remove barriers caused by the administrative burden of traditional work experience for schools and employers.

How is the employer pipeline of all the extra experiences being supported?

The Careers Hubs are working hard to “ready the system”, advanced Careers Hub pilots are testing employer support and engagement. Employers are responding positively to the opportunity for flexible approaches to delivering workplace experiences. They feedback that they are keen to see behaviour change from schools in the development of modernised delivery models and keen to understand the needs of schools, their programmes and learners to develop great experiences that are ultimately responsive to the needs of their businesses. Careers Hubs will play a critical role in supporting employers and schools to ensure workplace experiences are also responsive to local LMI, local growth sectors and skills needs.

What will count as a workplace experience towards the 10-day guarantee?

Actual workplace experiences will need to meet the BM6 definition of meaningful as outlined by Gatsby in their updated Benchmark Report. There will be many other factors included in your overall careers programme which will contribute to effective preparation and planning for workplace experiences, and they all have rightful value. CEC have published a [guide](#) to building meaningful experiences into progressive careers programmes.

The CEC designed equalex framework offers a programme that underpins meaningful work experiences and offers the opportunity to ensure young people develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to be able to access meaningful work experiences.

How can equalex help me to begin planning for the future?

The equalex framework has been designed by CEC to support the development of a quality programme of modern work experience which is progressive in nature and underpinned by [learning outcomes](#) which maximise impact for all learners. The framework is currently being tested across a number of pilots which include schools, special schools, employers, Careers Hubs and work experience providers. We look forward to sharing more detail about equalex and are currently gathering insight from these pilots to inform future developments. You can access the learning outcomes framework here [Modern Work Experience | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#) which may be helpful to consider in your early planning and strategic conversations regarding modern work experience.

Are there any changes or a work experience guarantee for post-16 learners?

The work experience guarantee ambition is for pre-16 learners. Post 16 institutions should focus on Benchmark 6 and refer to requirements outlined in the [16-19 study programme](#) guidance.

Are employers expected to map all activities against the equalex learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes are for young people to work towards and reflect on. Employers may help the process by simply identifying where their activities would sit on the [tiered equalex pyramid](#). When a school/Hub are supporting employers to develop workplace experiences they should be clear to employers what the purpose of the workplace experience is, this conversation would be sensibly driven by the learning outcomes.

Can workplace experiences be delivered in school?

Full policy guidance is still in development. Using the meaningful definitions as the North Star, schools are encouraged to innovate, test models and assess their impact.

Practical examples and case studies will be shared in due course.

A guide to Gatsby Benchmark 6 | Gatsby Benchmarks

The updated Gatsby Benchmark framework emphasises the need for careers programmes to be responsive to learner needs. This applies to all benchmarks including BM6 and professional judgment should be applied and decisions on provision informed by learner need and how the impact will be measured.

The CEC equalex model is designed to ensure that the quality of experiences AND encounters is raised and that programmes are underpinned by clear learning outcomes as outlined in Gatsby Benchmark 1. The published equalex learning outcomes and learner level objectives have been developed to model a best practice, progressive approach to multiple experiences that drives equity for ALL learners. They also form part of a wider set of [learning outcomes](#) shared by the CEC which may be used to underpin a whole careers programme.

Can BM5 encounters count towards 10 days worth of work experience?

Entire careers learning journeys will include encounters and experiences yet the definition for Benchmark 6 is applicable when planning a progressive approach to work experiences for the work experience guarantee. In this case it is useful to continue to refer Careers Leaders to the Gatsby [definitions of meaningful](#), which provide clear guidance for encounters and experiences separately. The Careers & Enterprise equalex model is designed to ensure that the quality of experiences AND encounters is raised and that programmes are underpinned by clear learning outcomes as outlined in Gatsby Benchmark 1. Encounters and experiences remain separate activity.

Does work experience that takes place in the school holidays count?

Yes, there are many high quality work experience opportunities which are offered in school holidays. The timing of the placement or experience may be determined by the employer and their availability, facilities and resources. In some cases learners may self-facilitate, and in others school may have brokered the placement or experience. Work experiences should be planned using the Gatsby BM6 meaningful definition, which emphasises learner recording and reflection. The equalex learning objectives provide the tool for learners to reflect on their experience and skill acquisition whether this is in or out of school time.

Does the work experience guarantee apply to young people with SEND?

Yes, the work experience guarantee applies to all learners pre-16. The equalex framework and approaches to meet the guarantee are being piloted in special schools, alternative provision institutions and for learners with SEND in mainstream institutions and a special multi academy trust has been part of the testing of the suitability of the learning objectives. A key principle of the work experience guarantee is equity of access.

Will there be incentives for businesses to support?

There is no current information available from the Government regarding funding for schools or incentives for employers.

What is equalex?

equalex is a structured framework of learning outcomes that defines what young people should gain from modern work experience. Developed by The Careers & Enterprise Company in response to national policy reform, it guides schools, employers, and delivery partners to co-create experiences that are purposeful, inclusive, and aligned to personal development goals. The framework recognises the varied needs of young people and supports differentiated models of delivery, ensuring that work experience is meaningful regardless of background or starting point. It also supports progression across key stages, encouraging a tiered and developmental approach to career readiness. equalex complements existing guidance such as the Gatsby Benchmarks, the Careers guidance and access for education and training providers statutory guidance May 2025, and the Careers Impact System, acting as a bridge between policy and practice.

Will practical examples be shared?

The Careers & Enterprise Company are collecting case studies to be shared and there will be a range of ways to access these through Careers Hubs, the CEC Resource Directory, an excellence seminar later in the year and through a new podcast series being developed later in the year. Case studies will be a blend of practical workplace experiences (many of these are already being showcased on LinkedIn now by schools, employers and Careers Hubs and can be found using #ModernWorkExperience #equalex or #WorkExperienceGuarantee) and more complete curriculum models and approaches being tested by schools in the pilot areas.

Are Careers Delivery Providers the same as the employers offering work experience placements? Or organisations a school would outsource their WEX organising to for a fee?

Careers delivery providers work with schools and employers across a diverse range of activities. Some are commissioned by employers to plan, support and deliver outreach activities and some are commissioned directly by schools.

How can we make workplace experiences meaningful at scale with groups of pupils?

Guidance to developing meaningful progressive experiences has been developed and case studies and practical examples will continue to be [shared](#).

Are Independent Schools subject to the statutory guidance?

In the context of work experience, the guarantee is for pre-16 learners currently. Statutory guidance is for: governing bodies, proprietors, school and college leaders, Careers Leaders and staff in:

- maintained schools
- academies
- free schools (including alternative provision academies and free schools) and colleges
- ITPs (that provide secondary education and post-16 education or training) local authorities that maintain pupil referral units providing secondary education and post-16 education

The guidance applies to:

- all pupils in school from year 7 to year 13
- all learners in colleges and ITPs up to and including the age of 18
- learners aged 19 to 25 with a current education, health and care plan (EHCP) in - place under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014

How is the CEC deciding which schools to initially work with?

Schools to be directly supported through the investment of work experience coordination are expected to be those in greatest need of support (primarily defined by their current benchmark 6 position, their rates of Free School Meals or other indicators of disadvantage, their responses to the Education Insights Survey and the overall diagnostic by the Hub, and “Theme 5” in the Careers Impact internal leadership review.)

How will Careers Leaders have the time to do this?

The work experience guarantee should be considered by school leaders as an ambition and direction of travel. The Careers Impact internal leadership review enables school leaders to consider provision, resourcing and the structure of careers programmes through a structured set of enquiry questions aligned to school improvement. A single Careers Leader cannot take the strategic decisions, develop a facilitating curriculum model or deliver the work experience guarantee in isolation. Delivery models and resourcing should be institution led decisions. Fuller policy guidance will be issued by the Department for Education in due course as outlined in the statutory guidance but the current period of time provides an opportunity to consider planning for longer term implementation. Models of impactful and distributed careers leadership will be shared.

When will support for schools be in place?

Support will be incrementally developed as longer term policy intent is defined. Current support can be seen on the equalex page on the [CEC Resource Directory](#).

Why is this being piloted with schools only?

Currently the work experience guarantee is for pre-16 pupils and post 16 requirements are defined by 16-19 study programme guidance. However, CEC are experiencing interest from colleges and sixth forms. The equalex learning objectives are free to access and we would be keen to hear from FE Colleges and Sixth Forms if they use them. We will consult further with colleges in due course.

How is the 10 day commitment defined?

The intent of the work experience guarantee is to start early. Therefore, the statutory guidance outlines 5 days worth of workplace experiences across key stage 3 and a further 5 days across key stage 4. These can be arranged in a format that is learner and cohort appropriate and determined by the school as part of curriculum planning. Schools should refer to the Statutory Guidance for the breakdown.

When will pilots that show how this methodology has worked at scale (e.g. whole year groups) be available to show details of what was delivered, under what time-frames and at what cost?

Pilots will continue and modern work experience programmes will expand further across academic year 2025/6 through Department for Education pilots and other programmes. Insights from testing and learning are being shared with DfE at key milestone points.

How will employer pipelines be sufficient?

Employers that are involved with Careers Hubs and national developments are supportive of a need for change. The current pipeline for work experience falters because a one week model often delivered at a fixed point in a school year is not fit for purpose for business partners in all cases. Employers have expressed keenness for schools to change their perceptions of work experience placements as a 1:1 unit of fixed time. This flexibility of approach opens up significant possibilities to enable many more employers to inspire and engage young people from an earlier age.

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