

About this paper

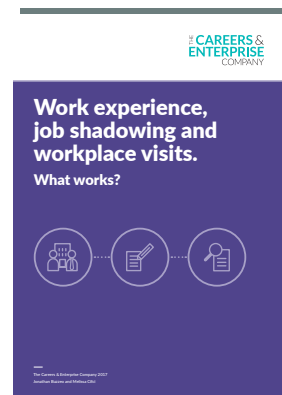


This paper summarises the research literature on three forms of work-related learning: work experience placements, job shadowing and workplace visits. It draws together the available evidence on the effectiveness of these three activities and highlights lessons for good practice.

This information may be used by schools, colleges and providers of work-related learning in order to support the programmes they deliver in these areas.

You can read our detailed review of the evidence on *Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?* on the Careers & Enterprise Company website.

[www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?](http://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/research/Work%20experience,%20job%20shadowing%20and%20workplace%20visits.%20What%20works?)



The Careers & Enterprise Company. (2017) *Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?*
London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

In brief



There is a lot of formative evidence to suggest that participating in a work experience placement is a 'potentially effective' activity for young people to undertake (a 2 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale). It has been shown to have a positive impact on employability skills, motivation in education, career-decision making and knowledge of the world of work. However, many of these outcomes are reported by participants themselves and there is a lack of robust, long-term investigations in this area.

The evidence base on job shadowing and workplace visits is far less extensive. Both activities have been shown to be 'potentially effective' for participants in just a few areas: job shadowing has been linked with an increased likelihood of continuing in education after leaving school, while workplace visits can assist in career-decision making and gaining an understanding of the world of work.

The evidence offers several lessons for how work experience may best be delivered, though there is no substantial discussion on job shadowing or workplace visits. It suggests that education providers should be committed to ensuring that students have access to a range of high-quality placement opportunities. However, providers will require appropriate training and funding to support this task. Students meanwhile should be matched to opportunities that are aligned with their career interests, and be properly prepared and debriefed in order to get the most out of the placement.

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Executive Summary: Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits. What works?



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Introduction

Work-related learning has long been part of the careers education landscape in British secondary schools. The former Department for Children, Schools and Families defined work-related learning as:

Planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices, and learning the skills for work.

This paper focuses on three forms of work-related learning that provide young people with the opportunity to visit and experience real workplaces:

- Work experience placements
- Job shadowing
- Workplace visits

It draws together the best evidence available on the effectiveness of these three activities and highlights lessons for good practice. The review is part of a broader process driven by The Careers & Enterprise Company to enhance our understanding of 'What Works' in careers education. This will help schools and colleges decide what careers and enterprise activities will most benefit students and how they should be implemented. It will also assist The Careers & Enterprise Company in working to improve the quality of the evidence base in this area.

The Careers & Enterprise Company use a scale developed by the Early Intervention Foundation for judging the quality of the evidence associated with careers education activities.

This scale and its associated terminology are used throughout this report when discussing these issues.

History of work-related learning

The launch of the Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in 1983 first saw the government provide funding for students in full-time compulsory education to gain experience of the workplace via a short-term placement. The aim of TVEI was to develop students' personal and social skills and help them to see the relevance of the curriculum to the world of work. Positive evaluations of TVEI led the government to continue funding for work experience once the initiative ended in 1997.

Following the 2002 Education Act, student involvement in work-related learning increased. The Act allowed schools to create more time for work-related learning. This commonly included a work experience placement. Recognising the benefits that work-related learning could have for all pupils, from 2004, its provision became a statutory requirement for all students in Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 year olds) in England.

Following the recommendations of the Wolf review, this statutory duty was removed in 2012. Education and training providers have since been encouraged to provide work experience for older students. Wolf identifies one of the primary outcomes of work experience as being the development of employability skills. Observing at the time that few young people move into full-time employment at the age of 16 (the former school leaving age), it was argued that it is more cost-effective to provide this experience when a student is closer to entering the labour market.

Current policy and practice

Schools are still free to decide whether and how work-related learning is delivered at KS4. The latest statutory guidance suggests that they should consider offering:

High quality work experience that properly reflects individuals' studies and strengths, and supports the academic curriculum.

There is limited information on the current prevalence of work experience in English secondary schools. However, Archer and Mooto's large-scale survey of students in Year 11 in the academic year 2014/15 showed that, less than half had undertaken some form of work experience by this time. Compared with survey work from previous years, this suggests that there has been a significant decline in provision for this age group. Archer and Mooto's work also identified regional disparities in provision,

with students in the north east, north west and Yorkshire significantly less likely to have participated in work experience.

As highlighted, since 2012, government policy has focused on encouraging the take-up of work experience placements post-16. This has been most evident in the creation of 16-19 study programmes. All students completing these programmes are expected to undertake work experience or some form of work-related training. Ofsted, in its common inspection framework for FE, sixth form and independent colleges, now assess these providers on student participation in purposeful and challenging work experience placements where appropriate to their learning programmes or future career ambitions.

Current research evidence suggests that similar work-related learning activities, such as job shadowing, are less widespread. A recent survey issued by Mann and colleagues found that less than 10 per cent of respondents had participated in this activity in either KS4 or KS5. There is no evidence on student participation in workplace visits that follows the reforms made to the Education Act in 2012. However, a survey of Year 11 pupils in England, conducted in 2009, suggests that they were reasonably common at this time with around 60 per cent of respondents having taken part in a visit. More recent surveys of teaching staff and work experience coordinators suggests that many are familiar with and continue to provide these opportunities to students, more so than for job shadowing.

Executive summary



Work experience placements, job shadowing opportunities and workplace visits provide students with the chance to be exposed to and learn about real workplaces. The evidence suggests that work experience is a 'potentially effective' activity for young people to engage in and is associated with a range of positive outcomes. Job shadowing and workplace visits, meanwhile, have only been shown to be 'potentially effective' across a few outcome areas.

Impacts associated with participating in these activities have been found across six domains in total.

1. Student Satisfaction

Work experience:

- Enjoyable experience

2. Employability Skills

Work experience:

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Confidence and maturity
- Team working
- Time management
- Problem solving skills

3. Personal Effectiveness

Work experience:

- Motivation to do well at school

4. Educational Outcomes

Job shadowing:

- Progression to further education

5. Career Readiness

Work experience and workplace visits:

- Decide on potential career options
- Insight into world of work

6. Career Outcomes

Work experience:

- Likelihood of being NEET
- Access to part-time work

Job shadowing:

- Wage returns
- Likelihood of being in employment



1. Education providers should be committed to ensuring access to high-quality placements

Schools and colleges should be committed to ensuring that students have access to a range of high-quality placement opportunities. Student-led approaches do not effectively challenge class and gender stereotypes, nor broaden young peoples career aspirations. Schools and colleges can improve the range of opportunities they offer by using brokerage services to strengthen their links with local employers, looking for or requesting skilled as opposed to unskilled placements for their students, and training staff to challenge stereotyping in the allocation of placements. Some providers will require additional financial resources and input from external agencies to support these actions

2. Timing and length

Flexibility in the timing and length of work experience can help to gain the support of employers to provide placements.

3. Matching

Students should be matched to placements that are aligned with their career ambitions.

4. Preparation

Adequately preparing students for work experience is seen to contribute towards positive outcomes for both participants and employers. Employers can be dissatisfied and have negative experiences if young people are sent to them without any knowledge of what to expect or how to behave.

5. Structure

Students see placements to be of limited value if they are 'low-status' roles incorporating repetitive tasks with no scope for wider career exploration and skill development. Schools, colleges and brokerage services should consult with employers to ensure work placements have a clear and varied structure, and to identify meaningful activities that students can be involved in and learn from.

6. Feedback and debriefing

Employers should provide feedback to students. Debriefing sessions should also be held following placements in order to encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt.

Student feedback should be collected in order to support the continuous improvement of placements.