

Work Experience Accessibility

Date: 11 November 2024

Report of: Director of Children and Families / Director of City Development

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

As part of initial work programming discussion for the 2024/25 municipal year the Children and Families Scrutiny Board identified work experience accessibility as an area of interest for the board. This item therefore brings an initial report to the scrutiny board to set the scene in terms of accessibility of work experience in Leeds.

A key area of interest for the Board, identified during initial discussion of the issue, was that too many young people are missing out on work experience and that disadvantaged young people are more likely to miss out than others.

Every young person needs good quality career guidance to make informed decisions about their future. Good career advice is a necessity for social mobility, those young people without significant social capital or home support to draw upon have the most to gain from a strong career guidance system. However, careers guidance across the UK appears to be inconsistent or not related to the curriculum nor does it always fully support students to make a suitable career choice post 16.

As part of the Corporate parenting role and to support the ambition to deliver on Child Friendly Wish 11 "*Young people have access to a wide range of work experience, employment and volunteering opportunities.*" Work has begun to explore the development of a dedicated work experience programme for young people who are currently in care or who are care leavers. Initial plans are being drawn together and it is hoped a pilot programme can be developed to implement the ambition however, further consultation is required to establish how a programme could work in practice recognising increased budget constraints, exploring the potential for external funding and decisions on the preferred delivery model to maximise the opportunity.

This item also features engagement with the Leeds Youth Council to seek views on work experience in the city, in response to the Board's desire to hear more directly from children and young people. This is in the consultation and engagement section of this report.

Recommendations

- a) The Children and Families Scrutiny Board is asked to note the contents of the report and identify linked areas of interest which will form the basis of future work in this area.

What is this report about?

1. In 2013, Gatsby commissioned Sir John Holman to set out what career guidance in England would be like if it were good by international standards. As a result, 8 Gatsby benchmarks were identified as a framework for world-class careers provision and have been adopted as part of the Government's Careers Strategy, statutory guidance for schools and guidance for colleges.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

1. A stable careers programme
 2. Learning from career and labour market information
 3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
 4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
 5. Encounters with employers and employees
 6. Experiences of workplaces
 7. Encounters with further and higher education
 8. Personal guidance
2. In 2022, the Department for Education asked Ofsted to review careers provision in schools and further education and skills providers. Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is now part of the inspection framework and schools and colleges are being asked to embed this within their curriculum and provide access to a range of employability skills, local labour market information and opportunities of the world of work so that young people are able to make an informed career choice
 3. Gatsby benchmarks 5 and 6 are related to students having access to opportunities of the world of work – this could be employability skills, site visits, careers talks and traditional work experience placements within a workplace.
 4. High quality work experience helps young people get ready for the world of work. When integrated into a structured careers programme - as defined by the Gatsby Benchmarks, work experience:
 - Increases awareness of jobs and pathways like apprenticeships.
 - Builds confidence in key skills like speaking and listening.
 - Reduces the likelihood of a young person becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) at 16 and 18.
 5. Too many young people are missing out on work experience. Disadvantaged young people are more likely to miss out than others.
 6. Not all secondary schools and colleges offer their students a traditional 1 or 2 week work placement. This could be due a number of reasons
 - cost - a risk assessment costs around £45 per student
 - time off timetable for students
 - suitable or sufficient placements – less than 1/3 employers offer a formal work experience programme, and often placements are accessed via word of mouth or as a direct relationship with the company
 7. Historically most, if not all, Local Authority footprints were supported by services known as Education Business Partnerships (EBPs). These organisations, usually operated within or at an arm's length from councils, were funded by central government until 2011. The main function of EBPs was to offer a menu of different Work Related Learning (WRL) experiences, both supporting schools' own Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) provision and, in particular, providing the brokerage service between schools and local businesses to ensure that all children had access to a work experience offer (usually for two weeks) in Year 10. Some EBPs also provided a brokerage service for Year 12 students.

Support to Leeds secondary schools, 6th form and FE colleges

8. Schools and colleges in Leeds are able to access support from a range of providers including the Employment and Skills service within the council, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority as well as access support from organisations such as Ahead Partnership and the Princes Trust. Some schools also purchase services using their own budgets to do so .
9. As a Local Authority Leeds City Council is committed to ensuring that all of our young people are informed about the training, jobs, careers and opportunities available to them. Our priorities include:
- Ensuring students have access to good quality careers information, advice and guidance
 - Raising awareness of and increasing the take up of apprenticeships
 - Reducing the number of our young people not in employment, education or training
10. The Council also offers opportunities to young people as an employer. This is co-ordinated through the Human Resources service. This is aimed at both offering work experience placements opportunities and meeting requests for work experience and providing a central contact point for placements to be offered from and managed.
11. This approach is effective and delivers opportunities for young people to gain experience of working in council services. However, changes to working patterns and the development of hybrid working approaches has meant that providing opportunities within a service for a number of weeks is less straightforward given the need for supervision of the placements. It is also the case that as council staff numbers have reduced in recent years time constraints on staff mean that work experience placements are not as easy to supervise, particularly over a typical two week placement.
12. In addition, given the nature of the council in terms of size some placements are delivered locally and are based on candidates having existing relationships or connections with staff that help to facilitate the placement. Whilst overall this remains a positive it does mean that full details on the placements offered can be difficult to capture. During the last two years Leeds City Council has received 201 requests to the work experience inbox, broken down as follows:

	Awaiting Mgrs Response	Awaiting Students Response	Expression Form Unreturned	Not work experience	Service Supporting	Service Unable to Support	Student Withdrew Interest	Total
Adults & Health								14
2023			3		3	2		8
2024		2				4		6
Children & Families								6
2023					1	2		3
2024				1		2		3
City Development								52
2023			3	4	10	11		28
2024	1	2	2	1	15	3		24
Comm, Hsg & Env								55
2023			3	3	21	6	1	34
2024	1		2		12	5	1	21
Strategy & Resources								58
2023			5	1	3	15	1	25
2024	3	2	6	2	7	13		33
Not Defined								10
2023			5					5
2024			3	1			1	5
Not Work Experience								6
2023				6				6
Grand Total	5	6	32	19	72	63	4	201

Employment and Skills service offer

The offer from the Councils Employment and Skills service focuses on good quality career guidance and linked education with employers

Careers Guidance

13. This involves:

- Start in Leeds - is an online careers guidance platform which provides access to local labour market information, sector specific information, job roles, pathways into careers and skills required: <https://leeds.startprofile.com/page/home-page>
- There is a CEIAG network and a monthly CEIAG newsletter for careers practitioners in educational settings
- Teacher CPD sessions on a range of topics
- Connecting employers with education by brokering opportunities of the world of work
- Apprenticeship information sessions
- The annual delivery of large scale careers events– the Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair, The SEND Next Choices – getting ready for adult life event, the Leeds Digital Skills Fair and The Leeds Creative Skills Festival. During the last year, these events were attended by around 21,000 young people and their parents and carers. The events provide exposure to employers in the city, information about local jobs, apprenticeships, skills and work experience as well as the opportunity to engage with businesses

Leeds SEND Employment Forum

14. As part of the Inclusive Growth Leeds programme, the Employment & Skills Service, in partnership with Children's Services, have launched the Leeds SEND Employment Forum.

15. With initial seed funding from the DfE, via the National Development Trust for Inclusion (NDTI), the council has created the forum, alongside a pilot programme focusing on developing supported internships for children with SEND without an EHCP.

16. Leeds SEND Employment Forum supports pathways into employment for people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The statistics for adults with a learning disability and autism known to adult social care, have remained consistently low across the country in recent years. [The latest figures published in October 2022](#) show the employment rate for people with a learning disability has fallen to just 4.8%.

17. The forum brings together a wide range of organisations who can offer their time, knowledge and expertise to help improve employment opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. This includes:

- Parents and carers
- Education support services
- Health and social care
- Schools
- Colleges, training providers and other supported internship providers
- Local voluntary and community sector organisations
- Employers
- Young people

18. Members of the forum are able to listen to speakers providing information on supported internships and on employment opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. An action plan has been developed and members will be invited to contribute their ideas and resources. So far there are over 50 members, including more than 10 employers who meet quarterly.

SEND Next Choices - Getting ready for adult life event

19. SEND Next Choices – Getting ready for adult life is a large event offering support to young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (and their parents, carers, support workers and teachers) as they move into adult life. Visitors can book free ticket/s to the event and speak with over 75 exhibitors to find out more about employment, training, education, support services and leisure activities available in Leeds.
20. The event was created in June 2022 and was the first event of its type in Leeds and the city region. Following extremely positive feedback from exhibitors and visitors, the event ran for the second time in 2023, and again on Tuesday 25 June 2024.
21. The event is held at the Leeds first direct arena as it offers a space large enough to accommodate the wide range of exhibitors needed. It is also in the heart of the city with easy access and has a high-profile status, providing parity with Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair.
22. In 2024, 2,000 visitors and 75 exhibitors attended the event on the day. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
23. Following the success of the event in both 2022, 2023 and 2024, the event steering group have proposed that the event is offered on an annual basis.

Education and business engagement

24. Research from the Education and Employers Taskforce shows that a young person who has had four or more meaningful encounters with employers is 86% more likely to be employed or in education or training.
25. Business volunteers are an integral and valuable asset to careers education and offer young people an opportunity to gain insight into local opportunities, support their skills development and raise awareness and aspiration in young people.
26. The Employment and Skills service support schools and colleges with requests for business engagement. The employer network currently consists of over 100 organisations covering 9 sectors and industries.
27. Recognising the need to connect students with the local business community the Employment and Skills service brokers a range of careers activities. These include students gaining knowledge about the Leeds labour market landscape, CV support, application and interview practise, work experience, taster days as well as sector specific presentations.
28. During the 2023/24 academic year Leeds based businesses supported in excess of 500 business volunteering hours to almost 8,000 young people across the city.

Future plans

29. Through the Leeds Business Anchors Network, the council invite businesses to work together, along with other partners in the city, to understand and unlock their potential and maximise their positive contribution to Leeds and it's people <https://www.inclusivegrowthleeds.com/leeds-business-anchors>
30. The Leeds Business Anchors offer a small number of work experience opportunities including 1 week placements within the workplace. However, these are small in number (around 8 opportunities per employer per year) and are resource intensive. The Anchors are keen to

explore a shared work experience programme where students can spend some time in each of the businesses. This will reduce resources on each employer and give students a more rounded experience.

31. Child Friendly Leeds Ambassadors. CFL Wish number 11 *“Young people have access to a wide range of work experience, employment and volunteering opportunities.”* It is proposed that CFL business ambassadors are asked to offer world of work opportunities as part of their CFL commitment.
32. Leeds City Council work experience opportunities – as noted above, often these are accessed by young people who have a friend or relative who works for the council. There are opportunities available although due to limited resources, agile working and a reduction in overall staffing numbers these are low in numbers and there is no “formal” work experience programme in place. Ad Hoc requests are managed either through individual services or via HR colleagues.
33. As noted in the brief summary to the report there is a possible opportunity to target resources at developing a work experience offer for young people who are currently in care or who are care leavers and work has been initiated in this area. This would involve developing the Leeds Council work experience offer as well as leveraging relationships with external stakeholders such as members of the Leeds Anchors Network, the Leeds Business Anchors network, Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors, developers, and contractors who have social value obligations. The aim would be to priorities children in care to ensure they have access to quality assured, ambitious and inspirational work experience, laying the foundations for future career development.

The offer from WYCA

34. Enterprise Advisers are representatives from businesses who are allocated to schools and colleges to help prepare young people for their next steps and to bridge the gap between business and education. Currently around 185 schools have access to an Enterprise Advisor (stats not available for individual LAs) who work directly with school and college careers leads to improve and embed careers plans.
<https://www.wybusiness-skills.com/skills/the-schools-partnership-team/>
35. Future Goals is an online careers guidance platform providing careers information and education as well as free upskilling courses for all ages across Leeds City Region.
<https://www.futuregoals.co.uk/>
36. Equalex – is a new approach to work experience which sits alongside other proven activity. It is designed to support 50 hours worth of high-quality experiences of world of work opportunities. It is currently being piloted in Greater Manchester but will be rolled out in West Yorkshire by the end of 2024.
37. Utilising grant funding to commission individual pilot projects linking students with careers advice and support . An example of this is the recently launched Green Innovators Primary School programme aimed at Key stage 2 pupils being run by Ahead partnership

Other examples of work experience opportunities across the city

38. The Cultural Exchange is a work experience programme for young people in Leeds which introduces them to non-performing roles in the creative industries. It is a collaborative week-long programme delivered by the Grand Futures Leeds Arts Network. The programme, aimed at year 10 students, takes place across various cultural and creative venues in Leeds. The programme aims to increase young people's awareness of creative sector job roles and organizations. Schools need to fund this programme from within their own budgets.

39. Ahead Partnership offer a work experience programme under their *Growing Talent* model which aims to bring together businesses and young people to solve challenges and address skills gaps in key growth sectors. The programme directs young people to programmes such as work experience, apprenticeships and skills bootcamps. The programme is funded by schools and employers: <https://www.aheadpartnership.org.uk/programmes/>
40. The Princes Trust offer “*Get Into*” courses which are designed to support young people to build the skills and experience needed for the world of work. Participants will gain
- In-demand, practical skills
 - Transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and communication
 - Valuable, relevant work experience or practical experience to demonstrate to potential employers
 - One-to-one support to increase confidence and establish a clear career plan
 - Access to job opportunities with our extensive network of employer partners
41. Leeds Building Society has developed a virtual work experience offer working in partnership with Springpod, a company that develops bespoke work experience opportunities with large national and regional companies, which provides interactive learning on what it is like to work for Leeds Building Society. This offers young people the opportunity to learn about the different career pathways available with LBS.

What impact will this proposal have?

42. This report initiates the Board’s work on the accessibility of work experience, the aim of this will be for scrutiny of this issue to add value and seek to improve opportunities and accessibility of work experience for young people in Leeds.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

43. The terms of reference of Scrutiny Boards in Leeds promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities of the Best City Ambition.
44. Consideration of this issue could have particular benefit to the Inclusive growth pillar as one of the key areas of interest is to understand and improve accessibility to work experience of young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

45. In the 2023/24 municipal year the scrutiny board considered trying to include the voices of children and young people more in the work they do and to try to seek direct feedback on work items considered by the board in the next, 2024/25, municipal year.
46. In order to respond to those discussions, the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, working with the Voice and Influence Team, has attended a session with the Leeds Youth Council (held on 14 September 2024) to initiate links with that forum and to specifically discuss work experience accessibility to try to understand and feed in the views of young people on their experiences and ideas on work experience in Leeds.

47. As part of this engagement session a brief presentation was made on local democracy generally and on work experience and Wish 11 in the Children and Young People's Plan ("*Young people have access to a wide range of work experience, employment and volunteering opportunities.*"). A number of questions were asked of the Youth Council, these were as follows and included is feedback from the young people in attendance:

- **Was work experience positive?**

- Feedback on this was generally positive from attendees with development of new skills, career ideas, positive mentoring experiences and career experiences highlighted as outcomes from doing work experience placements. However, there were other comments of a less positive nature linked to lack of responses to emails (when trying to access a placement), lack of support to understand the opportunities available and age restrictions on accessing placements.

- **What challenges did you experience, if any?**

- It was important to understand the views of young people on the challenges they face, and it was clear that there are a few obstacles to accessing work experience. The key issues raised were around accessibility and advertisement of placements, support available in schools (**Comment:** "*Schools don't give as much direction, no template emails.*"), lack of careers advice generally and availability of more challenging roles (**Comment:** "*Not intellectually challenged*"), barriers to access in some career areas such as data protection and whether a central access point could be developed that provides information, potentially through a central website that collates the Leeds offer to young people.

- **How easy was it to arrange and get to?**

- A number of issues were raised under this question. A key challenge highlighted was availability of roles that the young people want, so easier to access roles in lower skilled areas but less easy in other areas. (**Comment:** "*Limited work experience in jobs that we want to go into.*") The issue of emails and support for contacting employers was again raised under this heading, there was a suggestion of developing, through schools, a template email that could be used to contact employers. In addition, it was also noted that social connections either through parents or the young people themselves can be important as opposed to a more objective approach based on matching candidates to the placements available (**Comment:** "*Having social connections meant it was easy to arrange*"). Age restrictions was also raised again with a lack of availability for younger age groups and there being more availability post 16.

- **How could it be improved?**

- Similar themes emerged under this question with a focus on more information sharing and promotion from schools, a bigger role for careers advisors, potentially more of a role for local councillors in sharing information on possible placements, raising awareness of the careers fairs that are organised by the Council, sharing of feedback from those that have done work experience, allowing time off from school to attend careers fairs and potentially a stronger role for employers in the city around offering and promoting work experience (**Comment:** "*Companies should do more outreach to widen the variety of placements available.*")

- **Would you want to do work experience at Leeds City Council, was that an option for you?**

- This question was included to get a feel for awareness and accessibility of the offer from the Council. The feedback from the Youth Council suggested that more could be done

with a focus on making placements with the Council easier to access, better sharing of information on possible placements, developing access routes through local councillors, more contact with schools to share information on possible placements at the Council and that for those interested in politics placements at the Council would be a good opportunity (**Comments:** *"I think people who are interested in politics would enjoy this opportunity."* And: *"Should go into schools more so that students are at least aware of the opportunities at Leeds City Council."*)

- **Would you support Council work experience being targeted at more disadvantaged groups, such as care leavers?**

- This was included to support the development of care leavers being a protected characteristic by the Council. Feedback was strongly supportive of not just care leavers but other groups being prioritised such as SEND learners. In the main feedback centred on focussing on these groups to increase awareness, knowledge and availability of opportunities for more disadvantaged groups. (**Comment:** *"Yes disadvantaged groups tend to lack knowledge in these areas, being more inclusive would help a lot."*)

48. Observing the Youth Council and participating in discussion general themes and observations can be summarised as follows:

- Schools could offer more support; rather than the onus being on young people to find placements
- Often comes back to who you know so it can be hard to find suitable placements
- Not enough options for all sectors and possibly more could be done by employers to increase awareness and promote work experience placements
- Often opportunities have restrictions e.g. under 16, must be Leeds Beckett student or older to have wider access
- The Council should definitely have opportunities targeted specifically at care leavers and more widely at more disadvantaged groups
- The Council could do more to raise awareness of placement opportunities in council services
- Schools need to give students time off for careers fairs and offer more information and guidance where possible
- Ideally there would be a central website for all information and opportunities surrounding work experience

49. The feedback from the Youth Council is intended to provide information to the Board to help inform its work in this area and to also to trial approaches that will ensure that the Board is able to take on board the voices of children and young people as it considers reports and work items in the future.

What are the resource implications?

50. This is a summary report to inform initial work on the accessibility of work experience in Leeds, there are no resource implications currently. Whilst in its early phases the aim of targeting resources at providing work experience to those in care and care leavers, as part of the Council's corporate parenting role, would have resource implications in terms of Staff time and potential brokerage activity, details of these implications will be developed as part of future planning activity.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

51. This is an initial report responding to the Board's interest in work experience accessibility, there are currently no risks associated with the report.

What are the legal implications?

52. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success**What other options were considered?**

53. Not applicable at this stage.

How will success be measured?

54. Not applicable at this stage.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

55. Not applicable at this stage.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Leeds Careers Charter

Background papers

- None