

Work experience: Terms of Reference

Knowing where to find work experience can be challenging. The British Youth Council's Youth Select Committee has therefore launched an inquiry into the work experience opportunities available for young people and how these might be improved.

Inquiry background

In 2017, young people from across the country took part in the British Youth Council [Make Your Mark](#) ballot to decide what Members of the [UK Youth Parliament](#) should debate in the House of Commons. Work experience and knowing where to find it was voted as one of the three priority topics. Previous YSC inquiries have looked at *Body image*, *Mental health*, and *Tackling racial and religious discrimination*.

Work experience can provide young people with the opportunity to develop skills and confidence and learn about potential career paths. The Department for Education's 2016 [Employer Perspectives Survey](#) found that prior experience of work was an important part of securing a job. 65% of employers felt that work experience was critical when recruiting potential employees.

In 2015, [UKCES](#) illustrated a substantial decline in the proportion of young people combining study with paid work. In the mid-1990s, almost 50% of 16-17 year olds were "earning and learning"; by 2014, just 18% did so. The quality of work experience that young people are able to access while still in school may, therefore, be more important than ever. But despite recognising the importance of work experience, only 38% of employers in the DfE's survey had offered work experience in the previous twelve months.

Call for written submissions

The Committee would welcome submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, including young people and the organisations that support them, businesses and schools.

The Committee is particularly interested in hearing about the differing experiences of groups of young people experience in making the most of work experience (eg. due to ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic background and geographic location) and how these might be overcome.

Submissions may address any or all of the following questions.

General

1. What does "good quality work experience" look like? What do young people and businesses expect to get from it?
2. How important is good quality work experience to a successful industrial strategy?
3. What evidence is there that work experience boosts social mobility?

Young people

4. How do differences between young people (eg. geographic location, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, disability) affect the work experience opportunities they people have?
5. How could resources to help young people find out about and access work experience be improved?

Schools and businesses

6. Should compulsory work experience for under-16s be reinstated? What is the right age for work experience within compulsory education: 14-16 or 16-18?
7. How could schools and colleges be better supported to help their students access quality work experience?
8. Are services to help schools and colleges develop relationships with businesses working well? How could they be improved?
9. How could barriers to businesses (including small businesses) offering work experience be overcome?
10. What does good practice in offering, advertising and recruiting for work experience look like, and how can businesses be encouraged to follow it?
11. Does work experience benefit businesses? What are the motivations for businesses to offer work experience?

Other services and organisations

12. What role should the Government have in ensuring young people have access to quality work experience?
13. Should the Government invest in resources to help young people find work experience independently? What would these resources ideally look like?
14. How could private and third sector organisations be better supported and encouraged to help young people access quality work experience?
15. What lessons can be learned from the approaches of the devolved administrations and other countries to work experience?