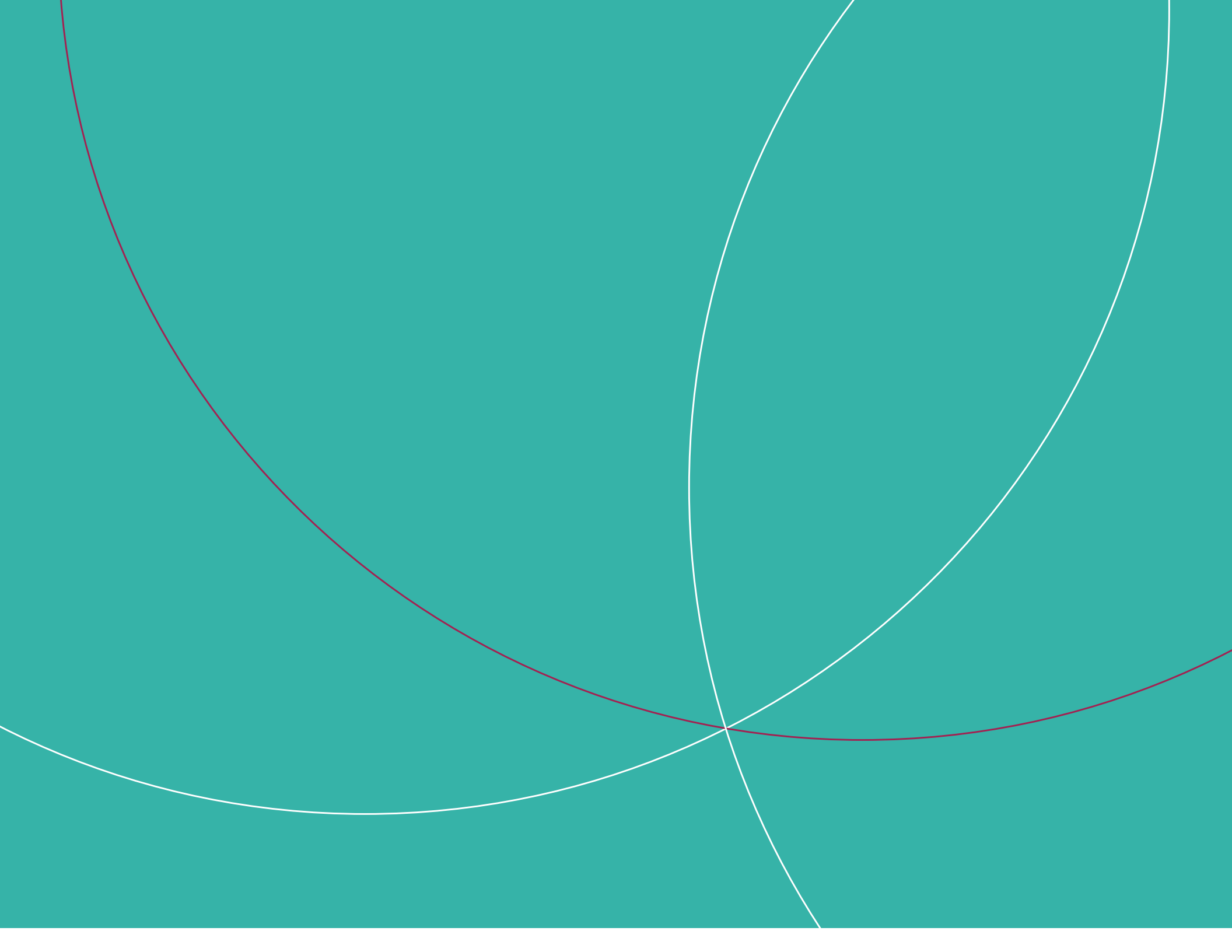


Connecting employers to students: *a practical guide for engaging young people with the world of work*







Contents

2	Foreword	
3	Introduction	
4	Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of programme delivery	
6	Post-programme support and having an alumni network to build a pipeline of talent	
8	Investing in essential or soft skills development	
10	Student voice: Understanding the needs of students	
12	Increasing paid work opportunities	
14	Increasing workplace encounters with students	
16	Offering meaningful experiences of the workplace	
18	Partnering with state schools	
20	Designing sustainable and impactful school outreach programmes	
22	Having a holistic organisational approach when running school outreach	
24	Summary	
26	Directory of organisations	

Foreword

The scale of inequality that faces our society has only been exacerbated by COVID-19. For young people and students, this has meant huge disruption to critical, formative years, and – in many cases – major challenges to their hopes and aspirations.

Those that are closest to those challenges, such as teachers and social workers, need and deserve the active support of a broader community in order to address these. Collaborative, multi-lateral partnerships such as the Student<>Employer Network are a critical part of the solution, offering a holistic approach to improving student outcomes and connecting businesses and young people in meaningful interactions.

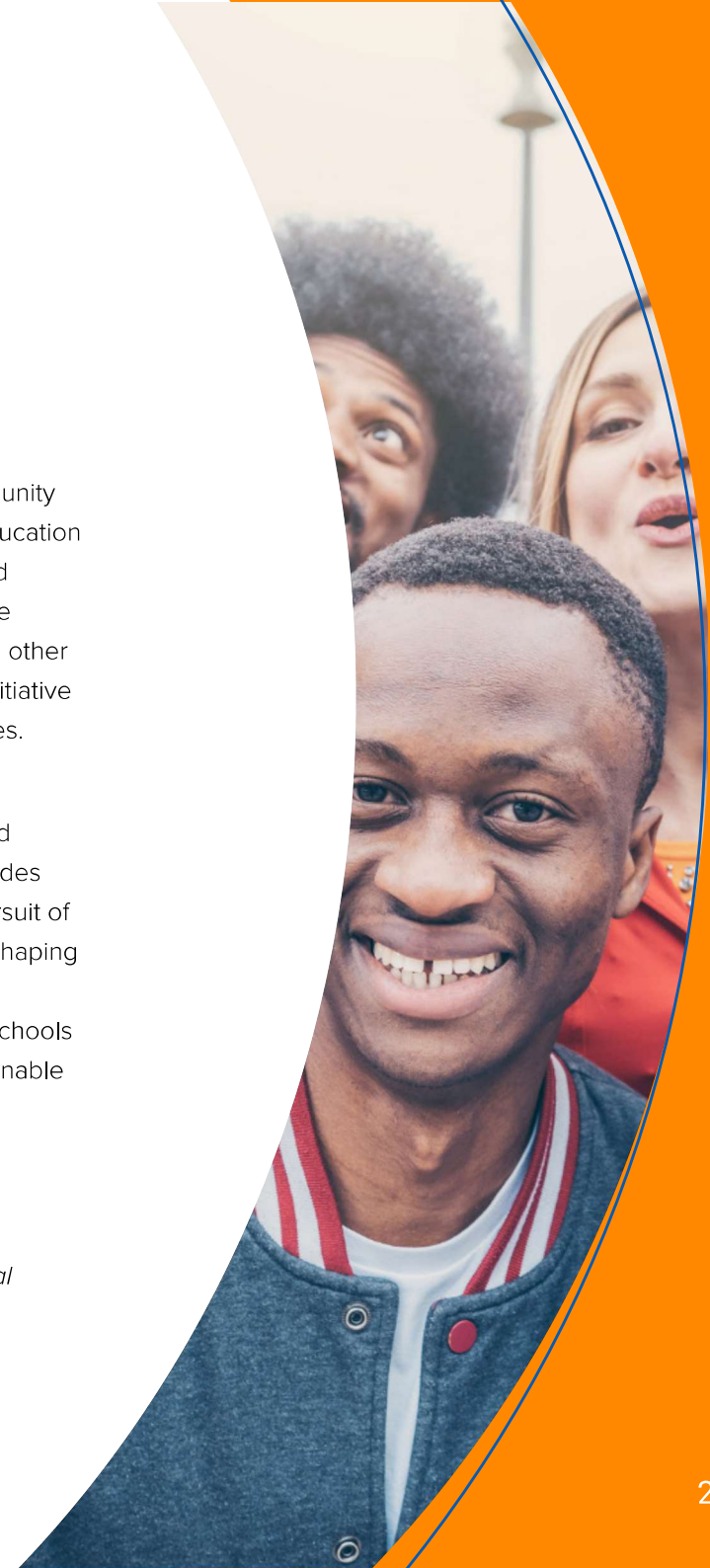
This guide from the Student<>Employer Network looks at how businesses and employers can make a tangible difference and create new opportunities for young people. It includes practical steps on how to structure and implement effective outreach programmes for maximum impact; from ensuring diversity and inclusion is at the heart of programme delivery, to organising meaningful.

Accenture's Teach First Network is a mature community made up of people who are committed to a fair education for all through effective student outreach. I'm proud to share our work in this space and hope that those reading will find the learnings presented by us and other organisations helpful. I've learned a lot from the initiative that I look forward to applying to future programmes.

With awareness of inequality in education and the workplace at its highest, it is time to transform good intentions into meaningful action – this guide provides clear and compelling support for businesses in pursuit of this goal. We are excited to continue refining and shaping our own outreach programmes according to these principles and look forward to seeing even more schools and business partners offering opportunities that enable all young people to achieve a successful and prosperous future.

Cyrus Suntook

Accenture Teach First Community Sponsor & Social Mobility Network Co-Lead



Introduction

Employers are keener than ever to engage with young people during their time in schools and colleges. Mainstream awareness of inequality in education and employment, along the lines of socio-economic status, race, gender identity, and sexual orientation in particular, has played a significant part in this.

Corporate organisations are recognising the value of tackling inequalities by engaging in outreach programmes with young people. The power of this outreach is recognised and accelerated by the Gatsby Benchmarks, which highlight encounters between employers and employees as one of the key features of great careers guidance. This is the case for all pupils, regardless of background.

Employers are also increasingly seeing the benefits of engaging with young people as a way to cultivate new talent and provide developmental opportunities for their employees. Students who engage with businesses at an early stage start to develop the knowledge and skills that are valued within the workplace.

Simultaneously, employees can strengthen their transferable skills through mentoring, guiding or training young people, as well as increasing motivation. There is a dual argument for working with students based on corporate social responsibility and of recruitment and retention.

Despite this, there is still a significant gap between the quality of offers being made from businesses to young people. There is not much in the way to guide employers in the most effective ways to engage young people, many of whom are likely to experience a number of barriers when talking to employers.

As a result, not all employer-led interactions have a significant positive impact on young people. At best, this is a poor use of time for employers, school staff, or students. At worst, it may harm a relationship between school staff and students on the one hand, and an employer on the other, resulting in the opposite of what was intended.

The desire is there for many organisations, but the big question is: How do we do it? It's challenging to find practical ways to access a diverse new talent pool.

We are four social enterprise leaders, all supported in our early development by Teach First, with a shared aim to create meaningful connections between schools and businesses.

We've teamed up to share our practical ideas in this report about how to engage with young people from diverse backgrounds and make your businesses diverse and inclusive from the start of the journey. There's also a directory of some great initiatives happening across the UK for you to engage with.

We hope that you get some practical ideas and inspiration to make a difference in your organisation.

Mayur Gupta, CEO, Career Accelerator

Christine Kinnear, CEO, With Insight Education

Patricia Mbangui, Centre Leader, IntoUniversity Walworth (formerly at CoachBright)

Laura North, CEO, We Speak



1. Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of programme delivery

What is the **problem?**

Lack of focus

Diversity initiatives have traditionally focused on gender equality and targeting based on socio-economic factors. The last few years has seen the gaze broaden to consider race and LGBT+ community needs. However, well-meaning broad-brush initiatives can fail to deliver true diversity of opportunity because they mask a multitude of nuances. For instance, gender-based programmes are fantastic for unleashing female potential yet may still have an under-representation of girls of colour amongst the beneficiaries.

So how can organisations deliver programmes that truly have diversity and inclusion at their heart?

What are the **solutions?**

1. Be insight led

Those organisations that embed diversity and inclusion in their programmes have it tied into the fabric of their mission. They create hard KPIs and hold themselves accountable against them. Ernst & Young Global (EY) took this approach with their Future Leaders Programme that has set ambitious targets to change the composition of those at Partner level.

To develop your own metrics, start by considering the data from your existing initiatives. Does this reveal any gaps in your existing reach and impact? For example, are the beneficiaries of your race & ethnicity initiatives predominantly Asian students, meaning that you are neglecting the black student talent pool?

2. Create programmes that address the need for equity

While equality treats everyone the same, equity recognises that some groups have greater needs and caters for this by providing tailored resources and opportunities. For example, the (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) OECD's Equity in Education report noted that selecting pupils on the basis of academic achievement tends to create great social differences. Conscious of this, companies like Accenture have moved to strengths-based selection criteria to determine who is awarded a place on their apprenticeship programmes. In addition, they provide workshops on how to excel at assessment centres, in recognition that those with less social capital can not pull upon the experience of friends and family to improve their chance of success.

Organisations that strive for equity need to become comfortable with programmes designed around affirmative action. Open, honest and, at times, awkward conversations will need to occur but the outcome will be worth it, i.e. bespoke programmes that achieve greater impact as they are designed with specific beneficiaries' needs in mind. A recent example of this is the Lighthouse Project with Google.



3. Co-creation with the beneficiaries

Despite the best of intentions, programme delivery can become clichéd if it is based on perceptions. To be most effective, it needs to cater to pupils' realities - collaborate with those who know their world. Engage your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in the programme design phase to help you to better understand the issues that the pupils face. Actively encourage ERG members to participate in the initiative to ensure representation in the programme team.

Better still, if your organisation has the resources, speak directly to the community that you hope to serve to determine what they would see working.

Continue the conversation into the evaluation stage by going beyond standard metrics such as engagement numbers. Instead, provide a safe-space for beneficiaries to share qualitative feedback on how interactions throughout the programme made them feel and actively ask them how the programme could be improved to make it even more inclusive.

Key recommendations recap

1. Be insight led. Use data and qualitative feedback to facilitate an iterative process of determining how truly representative and inclusive your existing initiatives are and adapt accordingly.
2. Recognise that different groups have varied needs so a one-size fits all approach to delivery will impact negatively on how inclusive it feels. Instead, create programmes that are crafted for the needs of smaller target groups.
3. Involve those in the know. Enrich your programme delivery by collaborating with colleagues that have the lived experience of the issue that you aspire to address.

2. Post-programme support and having an alumni network to build a pipeline of talent

What is the **problem?**

Often neglected

It is understandable why post-programme support is often considered as a complicated after-thought. It requires additional time and money to maintain and offers less of the immediate gratification of programme delivery. Yet post-programme support can be a powerful way of nurturing an alumni of future employees, consumers and organisational advocates. LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman went as far as to say, “If they promote a product or initiative on social media or respond to the tweets of customers or prospects, alumni have a credibility that current employees simply can’t duplicate.”

What are the **solutions?**

1. Consider post-programme support at the project planning stage

To be most effective, post-programme support should be aligned to your organisational strategy. This will then facilitate its inclusion in your communication and planning process so that it becomes a sustainable activity.

Post-programme support can be resource draining so building it into your organisational strategy ensures that consideration is given as to what can be realistically delivered and when. The important thing is consistency so that students come to expect when they will hear from you. [Accenture Horizons](#)’ school leaver programme provides a good example of this with participants encouraged to join their Talent Community.

It is also important to define clear metrics around engagement and impact from the outset so that you can comprehensively evaluate your efforts.

2. Adopt a **benefits-led offer**

Whatever your organisational goals are for providing the support, it is fundamental to understand what support the participants would value. This is best achieved by asking them using a short survey or focus group. Is it career talks, notifications of other programmes that you run or access to work experience? What are their ideas?

The survey should also determine what communications channels are optimal to reach them. The most beautiful of newsletters may sit in their inbox for weeks compared to a WhatsApp or Instagram message that is quickly digested. Embodying the students' views in your approach will help you avoid timely and expensive mistakes while improving student engagement.



3. Create a student journey that rewards loyalty

Use the survey answers to inform your post-programme support deliverables. A recommended approach to elicit ongoing buy-in is to create a sense of progression for the students.

- > For instance, all those that finish the programme are eligible to join the alumni network.
- > The alumni are provided with early bird notification of work experience and internship opportunities with those who apply for these opportunities awarded Ambassador status.
- > Ambassadors are exclusively invited to additional skills workshops and provided with further opportunities to build their skills, e.g. communications workshop.

A good example of this approach is Just Like Us, whose volunteers progress from pre-ambassador to ambassadors receiving 30 hours of training, with exclusive employability and skills training offered to those who volunteer for more than one year.



Key recommendations recap

1. Include post-programme support in your programme delivery planning process. This will ensure that you streamline processes that would otherwise make it cumbersome. For example, gather marketing and data sharing permissions in the programme delivery onboarding process.
2. Adopt a benefits-led approach that is informed by the students' input. This will support the creation of a more enduring bond.
3. Create a compelling student journey as this will encourage ongoing engagement with your organisation.

3. Investing in essential or soft skills development

What is the **problem?**

Disconnect

Employers say that soft skills are as important as academic qualifications. They have consistently argued that graduates are lacking the skills they'd prioritise over qualifications and that more needs to be done to shift the focus on to the importance of soft skills. But things haven't changed drastically since the 1997 Dearing report which indicated that around 50% of employers were dissatisfied with the level of graduate skills, and with communication skills in particular.

20 years later, employers say that motivation and communications skills are their top priorities but 40% of employers reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with wider character, behaviours, and attributes of school and college leavers.

So we know it's an issue but is there significant investment in essential or soft skills development for young people?

Academic attainment is inevitably a top priority. But alongside the widening attainment gap due to COVID is a widening soft skills gap, with the pandemic reducing opportunities for communication and interaction with employers.

This is where employers can invest. There is a disconnect that needs to be addressed, and employers are well placed to take a lead role by utilising the skills that they have in their organisation already.

What are the **solutions?**

1. Don't wait to develop talent

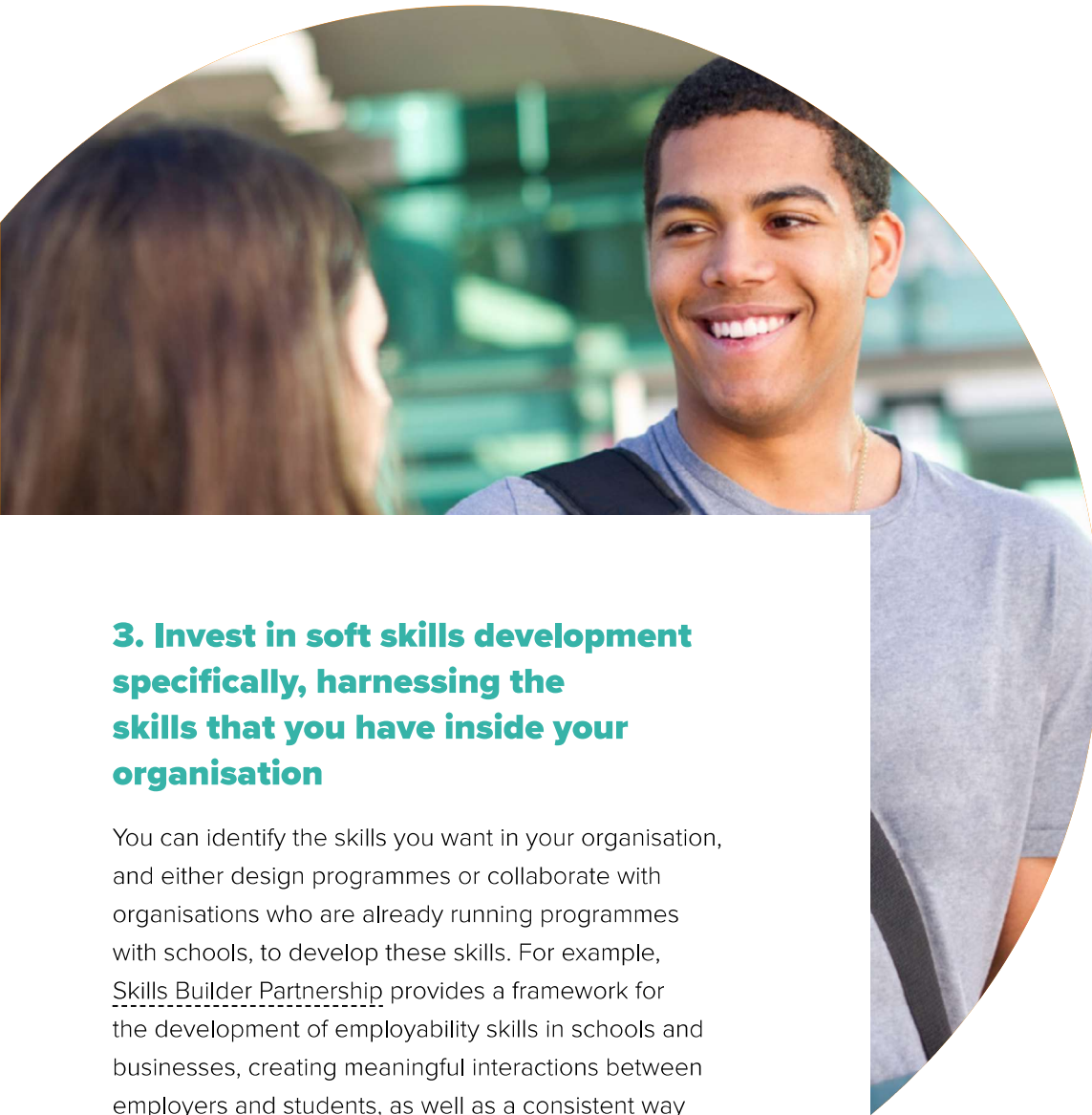
Development programmes often happen when a young person has been recruited. Start younger by working with schools to share soft skills with future talent so that by the time they arrive at your door (and they're more likely to arrive at your door due to increased confidence and belonging) they've been developing these skills for a number of years.

Reverse mentoring is one example of a way to work with new talent. The University of Birmingham runs a reverse mentoring programme where the university student is a mentor and an employee from a company, for example a hiring manager, is the mentee. This gives the mentor the power to positively change how organisations do things and offer insights, while building their transferable soft skills.

2. Use programmes as a way to start to engage with and evaluate talent differently

A more relaxed form of interaction between your employees and students can create a different impression and open up the potential for those that might fall at the first hurdle of a high pressure interview. Amaan's story in the Channel 4 documentary How to Break into the Elite is a powerful example of the barriers a talented young person can face in employment and particularly the high pressure interview. Programmes that last several weeks or months, rather than one-off interactions, can help you get to know the students and see their potential in different ways.





3. Invest in soft skills development specifically, harnessing the skills that you have inside your organisation

You can identify the skills you want in your organisation, and either design programmes or collaborate with organisations who are already running programmes with schools, to develop these skills. For example, [Skills Builder Partnership](#) provides a framework for the development of employability skills in schools and businesses, creating meaningful interactions between employers and students, as well as a consistent way of measuring progress. Mentoring programmes are another great way of enabling your staff to share the skills they have already with young people, both engaging and motivating your existing employees as well as building your pipeline of new talent.

Key recommendations recap

- 1.** Develop talent earlier, so you're building confidence, skills and relationships that are more likely to last and create a pipeline of new talent.
- 2.** Consider interventions with students that last weeks or months rather than one-off interactions as these can provide valuable ways to get to know students and evaluate them.
- 3.** Invest in soft skills development specifically and help your existing staff share their skills with young people.

4. Student voice: Understanding the needs of students

What is the problem?

A report from the [Social Mobility Commission](#) shows some industries focus recruitment on a small number of elite institutions and are therefore failing to hire talented young people from less advantaged backgrounds.

This also means that the needs of these students aren't being explored or understood. If your organisation has a vision to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, then you'll need to understand any barriers between your organisation and a more diverse talent pool.

It can be challenging for young people to get their voices heard or valued. Even in areas where we are talking about young people and education, they are often not represented.

Organisations need to consider:

- > What are the needs of young people they want to recruit?
- > What are the personal barriers these young people face?
- > What processes will meet their needs?

What are the solutions?

1. Create equal voice

It's a common issue that more confident people can dominate conversations, and less confident people recede into the background. If you allow people who are more confident to dominate, then it will consolidate a problem around diversity and inclusion, based on evidence that says that young people from deprived areas are [twice as likely to have communication difficulties](#). It means that less vocal young people won't get their voice heard, and may be locked out of opportunities. This is as much a part of chairing and facilitation as it is for individual confidence. Harvard Business Review found that only 35% of employees felt they could consistently contribute in meetings, and they offer guidance on [how to increase equal participation](#). If you reduce the sense of hierarchy and formality in meetings with young people, you'll hear opinions from a wider range of people.

2. Hear young people's voices

It's easy to make assumptions about what people think. If you are recruiting new talent, consider asking what young people think, which will in turn help with understanding how to engage and recruit them.

You can look at existing resources, for example [The Princes Trust Youth Index](#), [Teacher Tapp](#) and the [Youth Voice Census](#), all provide a good starting point to hear young people's voices. If you would like to hear young people's opinions directly, it can be on a small scale. For example you could send out surveys or hold focus groups. If you host an online discussion with a small group of students, you could ask an open question and split participants into pairs to discuss before they report back in the main room. If you want to regularly ask the opinion of young people, you could set up a Youth Advisory Panel. [Sort your Future's Youth Panel](#) test their products and give feedback. This also provides the additional benefit of skills development. Assiya, one of Sort your Future's advisors, says: *"It has enabled me to gain professional skills, and it's allowed me to feel involved within a team and project, which feels rewarding."*



3. Hire young people as consultants

You can also work more intensively with young people as consultants. Livity is a brand agency which has worked with 413 young people across 29 projects in 2020. In partnership with Facebook and The Prince's Trust, Livity recruited six young people who co-created Lightwork, an editorial campaign about creative digital careers to empower young people at risk of youth violence. Consultancy can be less in-depth as well. For example, Imagen Insights enables brands like eBay and Stella McCartney to crowdsource feedback, ideas and insights from a pool of young people. Consultancy also provides valuable paid work experience and helps build an alternative pipeline of talent for other roles in your company.

Key recommendations recap

1. As more confident people can dominate conversations, pay attention to how you can create space to hear each young person's contribution.
2. Ask young people what they think, which in turn will help with recruitment and engagement.
3. Hire young people as consultants to work with you, which has the added benefit of building employment opportunities and your pipeline.

5. Increasing paid work opportunities

What is the **problem**?

Unpaid work

Unpaid work opportunities can exclude young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who can't afford to work for free.

Sutton Trust research 'Pay as you Go' found that of those employers who offered internships, almost half reported offering internships paid below minimum wage, expenses only or completely unpaid.

But during 2017-19, 25% of 16-17 year olds were doing paid work according to the Resolution Foundation thinktank. School pupils worked an average eight hours per week with 52% employed in just three occupations – waiting staff, catering and retail.

This part-time paid work has been hit hard by Covid with workers aged under 25 more than twice as likely to have lost their job towards the end of 2020 (LSE survey).

There is a shortage of part-time opportunities, and more young people are working entrepreneurially. Barclays Life Skills found that 670,000 students (aged 14-21) now regularly make money through online avenues, for example buying and selling products online.

There is an opportunity here for companies across different industries to provide part-time work for young people to broaden the range of work opportunities available to them, developing skills and a sense of belonging, and engaging with a pipeline of diverse talent.

What are the **solutions**?

1. Assume that you will pay young people

Assume that you'll pay young people for working with you rather than asking them to volunteer, and ensure that this is raised early in conversations. For example, you can state what the hourly rate is when you offer the opportunity. This is an investment rather than a cost, and can be embedded through the whole strategy.

This has benefits for both the young people and the company. It enables young people to engage with you who otherwise might not be able to afford to do the work. The benefit to the company is that the young person will feel valued and be more committed as a result, as well as building up a pipeline of young people invested in and knowledgeable about your company. Businesses can learn a lot from young people and their lived experience.

2. Be creative with paid work opportunities

Work opportunities don't need to just be internships or work experience. You could offer fees for guest speakers from schools and colleges to deliver talks or take part in panel discussions. Jaami Barry, who was voted in as Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets at the age of 16, is a great example of an inspiring speaker. This kind of paid work would take up relatively small budgets, but can make a big difference to the students' employment opportunities, as well bringing in new perspectives to a company.

Social media is another area where young people could provide support. One sixth former from City and Islington College worked as a Social Media Manager for an online magazine, tapping into their skills around TikTok, Instagram and Twitter.

Rethink Mental Illness employs 15-19 year olds as Young Experts who create and deliver mental health workshops to peers.

What part-time paid roles can you offer? Where could young people's skills, insights and interests be useful in your business?

3. Offer more paid internships and part-time jobs

Apprenticeships and Kickstart are two obvious ways to engage with young people. A Kickstart placement is a six-month funded role for 16-24 year olds who are currently unemployed.

There are other schemes which help employers offer paid work to young people. Creative Access organise paid work experience placements in the creative industries over the summer for 16-24 year olds.

Career Ready works with companies to deliver paid internships that are not undergraduate or graduate schemes, but instead are four-week placements for young people aged 16-18.

Britsafe gives a run down on working hours and wages for under 16s and 18s in the UK.

By the time you get to undergraduate level, 74% of students in the UK depend on a part-time job to fund everyday living costs (The National Student Money Survey 2020). Santander Universities run paid internship schemes which means SMEs can host a funded intern.

Key recommendations recap

1. Assume that you'll pay young people to work with you as this has benefits for both the young people and your company.
2. Be creative with smaller, more flexible work projects, which can take up relatively small budgets but can have a big impact on a young person's employment opportunities.
3. Paid internships and part-time roles are a great way to employ young people in a structured way.



6. Increasing workplace encounters with students

What is the problem?

Students at the moment do not have enough meaningful encounters throughout their school lives. The Gatsby Benchmarks, a framework for improvement in careers provision, recommends that every pupil from the age of 11 should have at least one meaningful encounter per year with an employer.

However, according to the Careers and Enterprise Group "Closing the Gap" report, that is not what is currently taking place. Most of the time encounters are focused on post-16 and year 11 pupils, with year 7 pupils the least likely to experience encounters with the workplace. In year 7 and 8, only half of pupils had at least one meaningful encounter with an employer. As a result, pupils miss out on the benefits of engaging with an employer and getting different insights into the world of work.

This engagement often results in raised aspirations and greater understanding of their career possibilities.

For some schools, these encounters often take place on curriculum or pillar days. These are days where students are off timetable and there is a focus on learning outside of the national curriculum. These would be ideal opportunities for workplaces to provide a meaningful encounter; however, some workplaces are unaware of what these things are and so their offers may not fit in with the way that schools work.

Also given that these encounters are usually school directed with teachers reaching out to workplaces, this may mean that the type of workplaces that the students encounter are not varied enough.

What are the solutions?

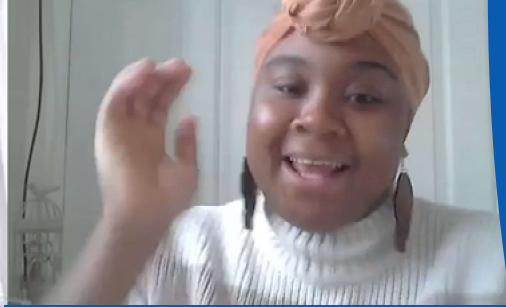
1. Delivery of a workshop

Design a workshop that can be used as part of a curriculum day that is easy for schools to adapt.

Examples of what to do within the workshop include:

- > The workshop would start by explaining what you do as an organisation, e.g. for X company it would be about showing off some really exciting design projects and famous things that you have created packaging for.
- > Next, include an activity that features skills that is used at your company, e.g. design packaging for this type of chocolate bar.
- > Finish with a chance for the pupils to present their ideas in a way that mimics what they might have to do in a work environment, e.g. they could have their ideas on a poster and pitch it to the group or they could have their finished products on display in the room.
- > Train staff to be able to deliver these workshops to young people in a way that is engaging. This can either be done internally or externally by reaching out to organisations that regularly engage with schools.





2. Offer opportunities for all pupils

Ensure that you are able to reach a range of pupils, across all year groups and demographics, as aspiration is important for all pupils.

Consider how the encounter would differ depending on the school age of the pupils. A year 7 workshop won't necessarily have to be as detailed as a year 12 workshop, which means the material does need to be tailored. Speak to the staff member you are liaising with and ask what is the best way to approach the workshop to support the pupils.

3. Utilise your local community

Be aware of schools in the local community and reach out to them - they may have not had any encounters with a work place like yours.

A great example is UBS who has a [partnership with the Bridge Academy](#). They offer curriculum support as well as funds to invest in resources and activities that enrich the curriculum. What you offer or how much you offer is entirely up to you.

Ways to reach out may also be sending an email to the most senior staff member (i.e. the headteacher) and asking to be linked to their careers leader or the staff member who holds responsibility for careers.

Key recommendations recap

1. Create pupil friendly sessions that can be adapted for school curriculum days.
2. Offer workplace encounters to all year groups.
3. Create contacts with career leads in the schools in the local area.



7. Offering meaningful experiences of the workplace



What is the problem?

“Fear of failure”

Insight to workplaces can be filtered and don't always represent a realistic picture of what day to day life looks and feels like. Consequently, pupils may not have all the information they need to make an informed decision about which sectors they'd like to work in.

King's College London's article about raising aspirations mentions the effect a fear of failure has on pupils and how this limits their aims. However, what may boost their own mindset about workspaces is if they were fully informed about what being at a place of work looks like.

Furthermore, experiences need to be more tailored to specific schools. What this means is even if a workplace has a workshop format that they have delivered for one set of students, it does not mean it will work the same in another context.

An example of this is CoachBright's InSight series, an online series where professionals from a specific sector are invited to answer questions from pupils and talk about their experiences. CoachBright gathered valuable feedback to help tailor future events.

One school suggested holding the event earlier in the day so the students could access better internet connections at the school. In addition, they found out that students in some regions may not get home in time for an after-school event due to irregular bus times. Some schools also asked our speakers to specifically mention BTECs in terms of applying for particular sectors.

In conclusion, each school is different so when providing experiences of the workplace whether this is a work placement, internship, a day in the office or a workshop delivered in school, they should always be tailored to the pupils who will be taking part.

What are the **solutions?**

a) **Tailor experiences to schools**

Discussing the experience with staff is crucial to understand what their pupils need exposure to. Talk with your lead contact and ask: What are the pupils like? What drives the pupils? What is the biggest barrier to the workplace for your pupils? What is worth mentioning that will really inspire the pupils?

b) **Ensure that the people leading are not the stereotypical cisgender white male or someone that is not close to their age**

This will ensure that all pupils will see themselves represented in all sectors and does not maintain that certain jobs are closed to those outside of the cisgender straight white male mould.

c) **Offer an authentic view of the workplace**

We want pupils to be as informed of what it is like to work in that space and presenting an authentic view can help with that. It is important to say we do not want to completely dissuade them so be careful in the way the downside is framed.

E.g.: *“A disadvantage of working in banking is that we work long hours, however we do get paid well so that makes up for the long hours”.*

Key recommendations recap

- 1.** Have a checklist of what must be covered for every workplace visit.
- 2.** Consider the staff member you choose to lead the experience.
- 3.** Tailor the experience to each school and ask in advance what the needs of the pupils are.



8. Partnering with state schools

What is the **problem?**

Lack of bandwidth

A lot of great businesses are keen to collaborate with state schools to provide their staff with meaningful volunteering opportunities and build a diverse pipeline of talent into their companies. [Research](#) shows employees who volunteer during work time report being more loyal and committed to their company ([Employee Volunteering, 2016](#)). In addition, 85% of businesses find volunteering advances talent as part of their learning and development strategy ([Neighbourly, 2017](#)). Finally, 88% of young people in employment were inclined to work for businesses with prominent CSR programmes ([PWC, 2008](#)).

However it can be challenging to build relationships with state schools given how busy staff members are, not to mention the amount of requests they receive on a regular basis from organisations trying to work with them.

What are the **solutions?**

1. Leverage existing school links within your company

One great way to work with state schools is to reconnect with any that you or your colleagues have worked at, as this way there is already a relationship here with the school and its decision makers.

Schools receive tonnes of partnership requests from different parties all the time so having already proven yourself at a school and having people vouch for you is an easy way to get a meeting with the decision maker, usually the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Previous front-line experience can include being an ex-teacher, support staff, volunteering or even being a trustee or governor at the school.

Some businesses, such as Accenture, Deloitte and PWC have [Teach First Ambassador Networks](#) composed of Teach First teachers who now work at these companies. They utilise their networks with their old school to connect their companies with them.

It may also be worth finding out about the staff at your company with school frontline experience who may be able to connect your business to their schools.

2. Work with partner state schools

In some cases state schools have partnerships with other schools who can introduce you to them. For example, some private schools have partnerships with state schools who they work closely with and support.

One way to reach state schools is to reach out to private schools you or your colleagues have links with (e.g. attended or have children attending) and ask them if they have any partnerships with state schools who they can recommend you to.

Some state schools and grammar schools are single-sex schools. If you have a relationship with one of these schools you can ask them to introduce you to their counterpart boys/girls school which should be feasible given that they are likely to already have good relationships and work closely together. In many cases they may actually want to be doing more work together, which your business can support by running programmes at both schools.





3. Ask for referrals to other state schools

One of the best ways to work with more state schools is to seek recommendations from existing state schools you have worked with. Headteachers tend to be very well networked and have built great relationships with their counterparts at other schools in their vicinity but also across the city and beyond.

Once you have worked well with a state school, you can have a review meeting with the headteacher at the end of the programme where you put together an impact report highlighting the work you've done with their young people and the outcomes achieved.

This is beneficial because even if a headteacher may have been the one who gave their school the green light to work with your business, it's very unlikely they would have been the ones to have supervised the programme and seen it in action. This is why it's good to give them a quick overview of what you did and how it went.

Secondly, if you've made an impact report they can share this with their counterparts in other schools for them to look at and review. In most cases, a recommendation from a headteacher is sufficient to get time in another headteacher's diary and puts you on a strong footing to work with that school.

Some schools are part of Multi Academy Trusts (groups of schools) and so headteachers may even have an incentive to scale your work together to the other schools in their Trust, both in their local city but also potentially across the UK, which is an exciting opportunity.

Another approach you can use is asking the headteacher you have worked with whether you can speak at their next Multi Academy Trust careers meeting, or headteacher meeting, to present your work to their schools and demonstrate the impact this work has had on the school and pupils.

Examples of Multi Academy Trusts include [Academies Enterprise Trust](#), [E-ACT](#), [Ark](#), [United Learning](#) and [Harris Federation](#)

Key recommendations recap

1. Leverage existing school links within your company. Warm relationships with schools usually tend to be the best way to secure a first meeting and work with them.
2. Work with partner state schools. Even if you currently only have private school or grammar school links, your contacts at these institutes will likely have some warm connections to state schools for you to work with.
3. Ask for referrals to other state schools. Headteachers and senior leader staff tend to be very well networked in the education world and will probably be able to put you in touch with warm, relevant contacts if you ask them to.

9. Designing sustainable and impactful school outreach programmes

What is the **problem?**

An evaluation deficit

Many businesses want to design sustainable and impactful school outreach programmes, however many struggle to do so for a number of reasons. [Research by ImpactEd](#) shows (2021) most schools and providers are not equipped to effectively evaluate their work. Over a six month period, only 3% of schools that they interviewed were confident in their impact evaluation. Similarly, a survey of 1,000 charities found that only 25% had been able to use evaluation to improve their services.

- > Firstly, there is a perverse incentive to focus on large impact numbers to showcase to third parties versus focusing on a quality and impact driven approach.
- > Secondly, there may be a lack of knowledge about programme pedagogy and how to design programmes for young people in the first place, even though the business likely means well and wants to help.
- > Thirdly, having to respond to the priority of the business - some businesses initially want to do school outreach and have senior leaders buy-in, but then the business strategy may change to focus on another needs area undermining the building of a sustainable school outreach programme. This is especially difficult for start-ups who are under a lot of financial pressures to stay in business even in the short term.
- > Lastly, sometimes the employees at a company don't reflect the demographic of students in state schools, and so whilst businesses mean well their programmes are not authentic to the young people they are trying to help.

What are the **solutions?**

1. Identify outcomes and programme design:

If businesses have the time and capacity they can leverage some tried and tested school or young people pedagogy frameworks such as [Understanding by Design](#) or the [Outcome evaluation](#). They can also read guides like the [Teacher's Toolkit](#) to find out more about good session planning.

Businesses have a variety of different incentives ranging from student numbers, to marketing, to recruitment targets. It's vital from the start for businesses to be open about their desired outcomes and put together a plan to ensure everyone will be satisfied by the end result.

Some ventures like to work with as many young people as possible, whilst others prefer to focus on a small and targeted cohort. Each approach has its relative advantages and disadvantages.

For example, [UBS invests tonnes of career support to one school](#) - the Bridge Academy in Hackney and by doing so they have been able to create a pipeline of students who end up working at UBS when launching their career. In contrast, other companies like to work with as many schools as possible in a more light touch way to achieve bigger impact numbers.

2. Co-create the programme with diversity networks and other departments in the business:

Many career ventures focus on working with state school students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds in business (including working class, female, people of colour and LGBT+ demographics). This provides a great opportunity for employees from these backgrounds to provide school outreach to act as a relatable role model if they want to.

Many businesses are starting to invest and grow their diversity networks, and promoting school outreach opportunities to these networks could be a great way to engage diverse staff and provide the opportunity for them to be the role models they never had when starting out in their careers.

It is useful to introduce this career schools outreach to the different departments at your organisation who may value their work either now or in the future; this includes: recruitment, marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), etc.

A school outreach programme may start out providing employee engagement and CSR opportunities but in a few years time may be able to provide a pipeline of their students into your company. The more visibility a programme has in an organisation the greater the chances that their services can be leveraged across the whole business



3. Bake in school outreach into someone's job or a committee

If a business is really keen on putting together an impactful and sustainable programme it is important that the business bakes this work into someone or a committee's job to make sure they invest in building a really successful programme. They can also hire someone to lead up on school outreach e.g. [Capgemini has a Schools Programme Team of employees whose job is to run school outreach.](#)

A business can also put together a voluntary committee of employees who help organise promoting the school outreach opportunities to employees, recruiting mentors and ensuring things go smoothly on the day. The committee members benefit from increased responsibility and doing something meaningful, whilst the career organisation benefits from being able to work with a team of passionate employees who can dedicate sufficient time and energy to ensure the school outreach goes well.

Key recommendations recap

1. Identify outcomes and programme design. If your business is doing to do any school outreach it makes sense to first take a step back, think about what you want to achieve and then design the programme.
2. Co-create the programme with diversity networks and other departments in the business. It is important and helpful to loop in any other possibly interested stakeholders in your business who may want to get involved shaping and running the school outreach programme
3. Bake in school outreach into someone's job or a committee. If your business is serious about doing an impactful job with school outreach it would be good for them to bake this workload into someone/a team's job to ensure it gets done and is accountable for.

> 10. Having a holistic organisational approach when running school outreach

What is the **problem?**

Many businesses are increasingly doing school outreach. However, not a lot of these initiatives are being connected to their wider business strategy, limiting their overall impact. Employee collaboration is essential to the workplace and the majority of employees agree. Teamwork facts show that three-quarters of employers see collaboration as an important factor that significantly impacts the company's success. Ironically, almost four in ten employees claim insufficient collaboration within their organisation (Team Sage).

There are a number of reasons for this.

- > Firstly, sometimes some parts of a business drive school outreach like diversity groups or CSR but this doesn't have the backing of senior leaders limiting its impact.
- > Secondly, different teams in businesses don't work closely enough with one another e.g. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) also called Diversity Groups, Human Resources (HR), CSR, senior leaders etc. and so they don't always realise when there is overlap between goals and activities around school outreach.
- > Thirdly, sometimes a business works with a number of schools and charity partners, however these partners don't want to connect with their counterparts within the business (e.g. other charity partners/schools the business works with due to perceived competition/clashes of conflict) and so the business doesn't leverage their partners 100%.
- > Finally, some partners a business works with are more concerned around employee volunteering and light touch school career support, whilst other organisations a business works with are primarily concerned with recruitment and bringing candidates into the company. In these cases they are different types of ventures where there may be limited overlap.

What are the **solutions?**

1. Getting senior buy-in for school outreach work

It is important to gain senior buy-in when it comes to school outreach work to ensure this type of work gets sufficient support in an organisation and is allowed to grow and achieve impact.

Business can facilitate this through presenting this plan to senior leaders, selling the business side of doing this type of work, positioning it as a competitive advantage, reverse mentoring, etc.

Once school outreach work has senior buy-in it will be a lot easier and more feasible for other departments and networks to get involved with this from a top down approach.

E.g. Vodafone's CEO received reverse mentoring around LGBT+ inclusion, and is now making Vodafone an LGBT+ inclusive company by investing budget and support to LGBT+ initiatives, including LGBT+ youth mentoring and school outreach mentoring.

2. Having a stakeholder meetings with different external partners

Businesses can arrange a stakeholder meeting with all their key external school, charity and recruitment partners to gauge what they are doing, where there are synergies and try to work with them more strategically. Even just having them around a table will probably help a business understand what resources they already have available.

3. Having a stakeholder meeting with different departments

Businesses can also host a stakeholder meeting with their different departments such as HR, CSR, ERGs to find out their goals and activities around school outreach, where they compliment each other and think more strategically about how they can work together.



Key recommendations recap

1. Getting senior buy-in for school outreach work. If your business is serious about running sustainable and impactful school outreach it is important for the senior leadership team to support this work to make sure others take it seriously.
2. Having stakeholder meetings with different external partners. Many businesses already work with a number of social mobility and diversity charity partners and it can be very useful to connect them up with one another to see where the business can work more effectively and systematically around this work.
3. Having a stakeholder meeting with different departments. A number of businesses work with charity and recruitment partners in silos limiting the impact of this work, however businesses can connect up different departments to find out what work they are doing around school outreach and recruitment and see if they can work closer together to make the most impact together.

Summary

In conclusion, connecting students to employers can be a lot more straightforward. The above tips give clear, tangible guidance that can be implemented by all employers no matter the size of the organisation. What is important to recognise is that though these steps make headway towards building lasting connections between students and employers, this is not a connection that can be built overnight. Rather we encourage all businesses to consistently implement the recommendations above so we can achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring there is direct access between students and employers that means all pupils have fewer barriers to future success in the workplace.



During the development of this guide, three themes began to emerge and link many of the recommendations. As employers begin their journeys into school outreach or reflect on the provision they already offer, it is worth keeping these themes in mind to ensure that solutions are impactful and meaningful.



The first theme of particular importance is ensuring that student voice is central to the work being carried out by employers. By necessity, this requires consultation with young people in a way which allows them to confidently and honestly share their thoughts and ideas. We can see the importance of this in many suggestions throughout this guide, not only in Section 4 on Student Voice.

For instance, the importance of co-creating with beneficiaries is recognised when discussing diversity and inclusion, and creating a benefits-led offer is also relevant to ensuring that you are enabling post-programme support. By ensuring that the voices of young people are prioritised when crafting provision, it ensures that the connections between employers and students are meeting the needs of young people at every stage.

A second emergent theme, which ties closely with the first, is the importance of working with schools. Part of the challenge in delivering meaningful outreach is a lack of knowledge regarding best practices of working with young people. Members of staff in schools, including but not limited to teaching staff, can offer useful insight and expertise regarding this. It is therefore unsurprising that the need to work carefully with schools is referenced many times throughout this guide, and not only in the section titled "Partnering with State Schools". Wherever possible, employers should be looking to collaborate with, and learn from, the schools with whom they wish to work.



The third and final key theme is the need for careful and thoughtful planning of provision. Employers need to start by considering the reasons that they are engaging in outreach work, so that they can best understand what they would like to achieve, and the necessary steps. Throughout this guide, there have been detailed a great number of the potential benefits of work with students, such as improving diversity and inclusion, developing early-stage talent, and providing an authentic view of workplaces. With this in mind, it is fundamental for all employers to ground their work in an awareness of exactly what they want to achieve, and then create a specific plan of how to do this. Working alongside student voice and school suggestions, as in themes one and two, will be very helpful in this process.

We hope that you will have recognised the great variety of opportunities available for employers within this field. These range from individual workshops in schools, to engaging with external partners, and offering paid internships for students, with many other possibilities throughout. Regardless of the stage, size, or type of business that wishes to engage with students, there are positive steps that all employers can take.

If all employers who read this guide started by taking one or two suggestions, we could start to build lasting and meaningful connections from employers to students on a wide scale. In taking this action, there will be real change in the world of career advice and support for young people, and increasingly opened doors for the talent of tomorrow.

Summary written by Rebecca Lewis
from Career Accelerator

Directory of organisations

Career Education:

1. [Career Accelerator](#) - Career Accelerator provides 14 -18 year old students with the opportunity to prepare for careers in the digital sector through real world career support, while enabling digital businesses to work with talented young people from diverse backgrounds.
2. [Founders4School](#) - Their mission is to inspire students and prepare them for the rapidly changing world of work. They do this by enabling educators to invite business leaders for encounters with their students in just four minutes.
3. [Prospela](#) - Prospela is a professional network for school & university students, giving them on -demand access to real employee E -mentors for career discovery, inspiration, and action planning.
4. [Business in the Community](#) - BITC is the largest and longest established business -led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. They work with members to continually improve their responsible business practice, leveraging their collective impact for the benefit of communities.
5. [Career Ready](#) - Their programmes build networks with employers, educators, and volunteers across the UK to give young people the career support, experiences, and insights they need to kickstart their futures.

University Access:

1. [CoachBright](#) - Provider of subject specific coaching, tutoring and leadership programmes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
2. [Access Project](#) - Training of employees to become weekly tutors who support disadvantaged children to raise their grades.
3. [Unifrog](#) - Online platform that enables students to compare every opportunity, then apply successfully.
4. [BeReady](#) - Deliverer of digital learning solutions that enable young people to gain qualifications, learn new life skills and further their careers.
5. [Into University](#) - Run local learning centres where young people receive tutoring and university access advice.

Apprenticeship Access:

1. [Multiverse](#) - They're creating diverse group of future leaders by providing high -quality apprenticeship programmes that combine work, training and community.
2. [Arch Apprentices](#) - Arch is a fully accredited training centre for City & Guilds and Edexcel, operating across London, Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester. They develop and deliver state of the art industry training.
3. [Makers Academy](#) - At Makers, are creating a new generation of tech talent who are skilled and ready for the changing world of work. They're inspired by the idea of discovering and unlocking potential in people for the benefit of 21st century business and society.
4. [QA](#) - QA delivers training, apprenticeships and tech skills to UK companies large and small. They believe everything starts with learners – transforming their careers and their lives.
5. [Unifrog](#) - Online platform that enables students to compare every opportunity, then apply successfully.

Race and Ethnicity:

1. [Reach Society](#) - Provide a number of programmes to encourage, motivate and inspire young people, especially black boys, to reach their potential.
2. [Opportunity Central](#) - Their Industry Catalogue offers practical advice from industry professionals as well as details of organisations that exist to support students who identify as BAME wishing to break into their industries.
3. [Colorintech](#) - Help students understand the tech industry and figure out where they fit into it.
4. [BBStem](#) - Aims to inspire the young Black British generation to pursue STEM subjects in university and beyond.
5. [With Insight Education](#) - Mentoring for black -heritage students to enable them to successfully apply to top third ranked universities and develop employability soft skills.

LGBT+:

1. Just Like Us - Just Like Us is the LGBT+ young people's charity. They were founded five years ago for a simple reason: growing up LGBT+ is still unacceptably tough. Their mission is to empower young people to champion LGBT+ equality. They want all young people to know that being LGBT+ is something to be celebrated.
2. Mermaids - Mermaids supports transgender, non-binary and gender diverse children and young people until their 20th birthday, as well as their families and professionals involved in their care.
3. National Student Pride - Their annual event is held in February (LGBT History Month) featuring talks and debates with inspirational activists, a weekend of roof-raising pride parties and the UK's largest queer-inclusive recruitment fair.
4. PinkNews Futures - PinkNews Futures is the largest LGBT+ careers conference in the UK, connecting students and recent graduates with inclusive employers! They give individuals the opportunity to network with their role models and build the skills needed to secure their dream jobs.
5. Stonewall - Stonewall stand for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people everywhere. They imagine a world where all LGBTQ+ people are free to be themselves. Campaigning as part of a global movement since 1989, they have helped create transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people across communities in the UK.

Female Youth:

1. The Girls' Network - inspires and empowers girls from the least advantaged communities by connecting them with a mentor and a network of professional role models who are women
2. STEMettes - works to inspire, support and motivate girls, young women and non-binary people aged 5-25 into the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) fields.
3. ThinkHERambition - a community for young women to connect with female role models who inspire, coach and provide them with the tools needed to promote their academic, personal and professional development
4. Code First Girls - provides free coding courses for young women and links up learners with companies who are hiring for tech roles.
5. Ms Independent - runs programmes and courses to equip young women with skills and knowledge to thrive in any career path.

Soft Skill Development:

1. We Speak - trains corporate employees in communication and mentoring skills to help improve the speaking confidence and employment opportunities of young people from under-represented backgrounds.
2. Skills Builder Partnership - a partnership that brings together more than 700 organisations, including schools and businesses to build essential skills using the Skills Builder Universal Framework.
3. Franklin Scholars - a peer tutoring and coaching programme, training secondary school students to be personal tutors and champions to the younger students when they need it most.
4. Yes Futures - empowers young people to believe in themselves and discover their personal potential, focusing on four essential skills of confidence, resilience, communication and self-awareness.
5. Making the Leap - provides training for disadvantaged young people in the UK to develop their skills, confidence and outlook to choose and succeed in a career.

Digital or STEM Skill Development:

1. STEM Learning - STEM Learning is the UK's largest provider of education and careers support in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
2. Digital Schoolhouse - Ukie's Digital Schoolhouse is a not-for-profit programme which enables primary schools to experience free creative computing workshops from their local Schoolhouse. Combined with ingenious computing, the programme also engages thousands of students with its pioneering and immersive careers education. Schoolhouses are not charged for their participation in the programme, nor for the support that they receive.
3. BBStem - Aims to encourage, enable, and energise individuals in business, industry, and education to widen participation and contribution of Black individuals in STEM. Their professional network of BBSTEM members aims to inspire the young Black British generation to pursue STEM subjects in university and beyond. Their principal mission is to have Black parity in the UK's STEM workforce, from school to the highest level in industry.
4. Big Bang Fair - The Big Bang UK Young Scientists and Engineers Fair is the United Kingdom's largest celebration of STEM for young people, and is one of the largest youth events in the UK. The fair takes place annually in March.
5. Coding Dojo - One of the top coding bootcamps. Their programme is scientifically designed to ensure their graduates thrive as STEM professionals for the rest of their careers.

Youth Leadership and Voice:

1. Reclaim - a youth leadership and social change organisation which supports and amplifies the voices of working class young people.
2. Enactus - a community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives.
3. UK Youth - National charity encompassing 40 regional hubs, UK Youth delivers large scale skills development programmes for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
4. Imagen Insights - enables agencies and brands to crowdsource qualitative feedback, ideas and insights from their community of young people.
5. Aleto Foundation - offers leadership and mentoring programmes and other opportunities to young people who have demonstrated exceptional leadership potential.

Employer Support or Training:

1. Teach First - An organisation who's world -class teacher training gives those eager to step up and build a fairer education system, the tools and networks to do it.
2. Ark - A charity which supports ventures to tackle issues across education and society and students in disadvantaged communities through its schools.
3. ImpactEd - Supports third sector organisations, universities, and businesses to evaluate their impact, learn from it, and prioritise what is working best to improve outcomes for young people.
4. Business in the Community - Supports its members in improving their business practice through highlighting the impact on local communities.
5. The Centre for Education and Youth - Provides support in terms of up -to -date research that gives an insight to the key policies and ideas centred on young people.

Networks and Coalitions:

1. Fair Education Alliance - A coalition of over 200 organisations which aims to tackle inequality in the education system.
2. UK Youth - National charity encompassing 40 regional hubs, UK Youth delivers large scale skills development programmes for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. Elephant Group: A headteacher led collaboration created to ensure that their top third non -selective state school students have access to top third universities.
4. Future First - Helps state schools and colleges to build alumni communities by facilitating former students to return as career and education role models and mentors.
5. Tech London Advocates - A network of tech leaders, entrepreneurs and experts who champion London as a global tech hub and campaign to address challenges such as diversity and digital skills facing the sector.





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