

Work Experience Works

Toolkit for SMEs



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Introduction to this toolkit

Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) often experience a combination of challenges that limit their ability to access and sustain employment. These include digital poverty, mental health concerns, neurodiversity, caring responsibilities, and low confidence—all of which can be compounded by geographic isolation, financial hardship, and limited access to inclusive opportunities.

Many young people also report that the lack of work experience is the single biggest obstacle to securing a job, reinforcing the “no experience, no job” cycle. To break the cycle of youth unemployment and unlock the potential of this untapped talent, we must scale high-quality, inclusive, and adaptable work experience opportunities that reflect the lived realities of NEET young people and the evolving nature of work.

Purpose of this Toolkit

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the UK economy—and they have a powerful role to play in shaping the future workforce. This toolkit has been created to support SMEs who are ready to make a difference by offering meaningful work experience opportunities to NEET young people. Whether you're offering a one-day taster or a longer placement, this guidance is designed to make it easy to get involved. Inside, you'll find practical templates, flexible frameworks, and examples to help you shape a programme that works for your business and the young people you support. Done well, work experience can be life-changing—for the young person and for your organisation.

About Movement to Work

Movement to Work (MtW) is a not-for-profit coalition of UK employers, government bodies, and civil society organisations committed to breaking the “no experience, no job” cycle. Since 2013, we've supported the delivery of over 225,000 work placements with some of the UK's most recognisable employers—including Accenture, BAE Systems, M&S, Tesco and many more. Our mission is to create inclusive, high-quality work experiences that empower young people aged 16–30 who are NEET to build confidence, develop essential skills, and take meaningful steps into the world of work.

How We Support Employers

Whether you're just getting started or scaling up your youth employability efforts, **Movement to Work offers free, hands-on support** to help you design and deliver impactful programmes that meet your business goals.

How we can help

- **Tailored guidance** to design placements and taster sessions that align with your sector, capacity, and recruitment needs
- **Editable templates** for taster sessions and placements of various lengths – adaptable to your sector and capacity
- **Reaching motivated young people** via our [Talent Platform](#) and [Youth Opportunities Bulletin](#)
- **Connections to trusted partners** – including training providers, local authorities, and other employers for collaboration and shared learning
- **Advice on funding routes**, from internal budgets to third-sector and government-backed support

- **Ongoing support** through events, employer forums, and drop-in sessions to keep you connected, informed, and inspired
- **Supporting SMEs** by hosting a drop-in clinic every six weeks enabling all our SME network members to share experiences, ask questions, and collaborate on solutions.

We're here to make it easier for employers to create life-changing opportunities – and build a stronger, future-ready workforce.



Work Experience Works: Why is this important?



For many young NEET people, the path into work is blocked by a mix of personal and systemic barriers.

By offering flexible, inclusive, and meaningful work experience, we can help break that cycle—giving young people the chance to build confidence, develop skills, and take real steps toward sustainable employment.

To support this, Movement to Work has co-developed the Work Experience Works Guidance in collaboration with its employer and partner network. This resource is designed to help employers create effective pathways into employment for NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people.

It promotes best-practice approaches, shares real-life success stories, and encourages a blended model that combines digital innovation with proven frameworks to maximise impact.

[Click here to Download the Work Experience Works Guidance](#)

If you would like to support under 16's The Careers & Enterprise Company could support you:

[The Careers & Enterprise Company](#)

Testimonials

"Seeing that five months ago I didn't know where I was going to be... and now here I am because of the Movement to Work programme."

Fathi Abdulahi

"I wish employers knew how incredibly talented young people are... and how hardworking they are, especially in the job market at the moment."

Missy Butler (DWP)

"I feel like this placement really, really was a turning point and catalyst for me to find who I am as a person."

Alfie Erfan



Flow of journey to creating meaningful work experience opportunities





Get inspired

To help you to create meaningful work experience aligned with the Work Experience Works principles we've developed a set of editable frameworks, as well as ideas and suggestions of what could be included to help you shape a work experience opportunity that fits your capacity—whether that's in person, virtual, hybrid a single day, a few days, or a longer placement.

Get inspired: Top tips

Our top tips for meaningful and impactful work experience, whichever path you choose:

1: Keep it welcoming

First impressions matter. Begin with a friendly introduction and a simple icebreaker to help young people feel at ease and build early rapport.

2: Keep Communication Clear

Use plain, accessible language to explain roles, tasks and expectations. Avoid jargon and acronyms that might be unfamiliar.

3: Bring the Role to Life

Don't just explain—show how it's done. Let young people shadow team members or try out tasks to build understanding and confidence.

4: Involve the Right People

Choose team members who are genuinely interested in supporting young people. Who are patient, enthusiastic, and have time to engage meaningfully.

5: Be Mindful of Time

Keep sessions focused and engaging. Short, well-structured experiences can be just as impactful as longer placements.

6. Create a Space for Questions

Encourage curiosity. Make it clear that all questions are welcome—there's no such thing as a silly one.

7. Leave a Lasting Impression

Showcase your organisation's values and culture. Even if they don't pursue a role with you, the experience should inspire and inform their next steps.

8. Follow Up Thoughtfully

Offer feedback, signpost to further opportunities, or simply check in. Showing you care helps build confidence and trust.

These flexible templates are designed to work around your business needs while ensuring the experience remains high quality, accessible, immersive, and meaningful. However long it lasts, a well-designed placement can offer a powerful insight into the world of work and help young people take confident steps toward their future.



Get inspired:

Template frameworks

These flexible templates are designed to work around your business needs while ensuring the experience remains high quality, accessible, immersive, and meaningful. However long it lasts, a well-designed placement can offer a powerful insight into the world of work and help young people take confident steps toward their future.



Taster session

A taster session is a short, structured experience designed to introduce NEET young people to your organisation. It offers them:

- A first-hand look at the workplace
- The chance to meet colleagues
- An opportunity to observe roles in action
- Exposure to real working environments and expectations

The focus is on insight and inspiration, not just recruitment. It's about helping young people explore possibilities and build confidence in a professional setting.

A typical taster session includes a mix of short, engaging activities and can last **around 3-4 hours**.

[TASTER SESSION DOWNLOADABLE FRAMEWORK](#)



Get inspired:

Template frameworks

These flexible templates are designed to work around your business needs while ensuring the experience remains high quality, accessible, immersive, and meaningful. However long it lasts, a well-designed placement can offer a powerful insight into the world of work and help young people take confident steps toward their future.

In-person

In-person work experience is a structured, on-site placement where NEET young people are immersed in a real working environment. It includes activities like:

- Shadowing team members
- Participating in team meetings
- Completing activities
- Engaging in workshops and reflection sessions

This format allows young people to experience the day-to-day realities of a workplace, interact with colleagues, and build practical skills through hands-on learning.

One size does not fit all and duration is completely flexible with **a suggestion of 4-6 hours per day.**

[IN-PERSON DOWNLOADABLE FRAMEWORK](#)



Get inspired:

Template frameworks

These flexible templates are designed to work around your business needs while ensuring the experience remains high quality, accessible, immersive, and meaningful. However long it lasts, a well-designed placement can offer a powerful insight into the world of work and help young people take confident steps toward their future.

Hybrid

Hybrid work experience is a programme that blends virtual and in-person activities to give young people a flexible, supportive introduction to the workplace. It typically includes:

- Online onboarding, mentoring, and digital skills development
- In-person shadowing, team meetings, and project work
- Regular reflection and feedback sessions
- This format allows participants to gradually build confidence and skills in both remote and face-to-face settings.
- Typically increasing accessibility by reducing barriers like travel costs, health issues, or caring responsibilities

One size does not fit all and duration is completely flexible with **a suggestion of 4-6 hours per day.**

[HYBRID DOWNLOADABLE FRAMEWORK](#)





Tools for employers

Movement to Work are here to support you every step of the way in creating your work experience programme.

In this section we have included some of the considerations you should make before creating your programme.

Tools for employers:

Key factors



Funding

Funding will vary depending on your region, our Youth Engagement Network can support with explaining any funding they could secure for a programme and your Local Combined Authority can also help you to navigate this. Please click here to review LCA funding (to come later).

Expense Considerations

Not all work experience needs to be paid, but it should never come at a cost to the young person. This means that while employers are not required to offer wages for short-term placements, they are strongly encouraged to cover reasonable expenses to remove financial barriers.

These typically include:

- Travel costs (e.g. public transport fares or mileage)
- Lunch or daily meal allowance
- Workwear or PPE if required
- Digital access for remote or hybrid placements

Safeguarding

When providing work experience for over 18's and vulnerable adults you must ensure you have a Safeguarding policy in place and that all involved colleagues have up to date safeguarding training.

The tools below can help if you do not already have something in place:

[Health, Safety and Safeguarding Policy](#)
[Health, Safety and Safeguarding Checklist](#)
[Safeguarding Training](#)
[Gen AI Policy Guidance](#)

Accessing Young NEET People

We work closely with a number of Youth Outreach organisations that directly engage with NEET young people seeking opportunities such as taster sessions and work experience. A variety of these partners are listed below and span a wide range of backgrounds and needs and can help you reach your goals.



Please reach out to a member of the team or info@movementtwork.com if you would like to discuss any of these organisations further.

In addition, we can connect you with the relevant DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) team in your area to further support outreach and engagement.



Tools for young people

These tools and resources can be guided by the employers for young people to use through their experience.

Tools for young people: Helpful resources

Click on the circles to the right to explore our resources.

And, explore Work Experience, Direct Entry Level roles, Apprenticeships or Learning Opportunities on Movement to Work's dedicated platform.

This is the one place to find all of the opportunities our network currently has to offer:

Movement to Work Talent Platform



**Employability
Skills
Resources**

**Employability
Skills
Curriculum**

**Generative
AI**

 **BARCLAYS | LifeSkills**

**Build your core
transferable
skills**

 **BARCLAYS | LifeSkills**

**Discover your
personal skills
and strengths**

Get involved

Join Movement to Work – It's FREE!

Movement to Work is a registered charity offering free support to businesses seeking to develop youth employability programmes.

There is no cost to join, no monthly fees, no price tag for events – no catch!

All we ask is that you join our mission and commit to creating quality opportunities for young people, and in return, we're here to help you every step of the way.

Get in touch!



Already involved in Movement to Work?

Reach out to a member of our team if you would like to explore how to embed this guidance into your youth employability approach:

info@movementtowork.com



movementtowork.com/work-experience-works

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