



# **EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FOR 16/17 YEAR OLDS STUDYING BELOW LEVEL 2**

**GUIDE FOR PROVIDERS MARCH 2018**

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# Introduction

**This resource is for providers and organisations working across the Further Education sector with 16 and 17 year olds studying below Level 2. It provides step by step guidance on how to design, deliver and evaluate effective employer engagement activities with this group of young people.**

Young people studying below Level 2 are engaged in a wide range of provision, delivered by many different types of organisations working across the FE sector. This can include formal courses delivered by general FE, sixth form or land-based colleges; programmes focussed around specific activities or outcomes; or programmes targeted at specific groups of young people, often delivered by third-sector organisations or statutory services. The duration and aims of

such programmes vary considerably, however, the key messages in this guide will help all types of providers and organisations to consider how they can design and deliver effective employer engagement activities and secure good outcomes for young people on their pathway to higher levels of study and/or employment.

The guide is accompanied by a set of 25 case studies which demonstrate effective practice in employer engagement activities for 16/17 year olds studying below Level 2. Vignettes from the case studies are included throughout this guide; the full versions can be found at: [\[add link when available\]](#).

This resource was developed through a project commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation,

which aimed to identify effective practice in employer engagement in provision for 16/17 year olds on courses below Level 2. The findings of the project will support the development of the proposed 'transition year' which will offer tailored and flexible support for young people who are not ready to study at Level 2 at age 16/17. A report on the project findings can be downloaded from: [\[add link when available\]](#).

This guide was developed by Learning and Work Institute (L&W). L&W is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.



# Designing effective employer engagement activities

**For employer engagement activities to be effective for all young people, particularly those studying at lower levels, careful design and planning is required at both strategic and operational levels. This will ensure that activities support the achievement of learning outcomes, meet young people's needs and interests, address employers' motivations for engaging, and align with the wider strategic priorities of your organisation.**

This section provides advice on who you might involve in the planning and design of your activities and how. It also sets out the factors that you should consider when making decisions about which activities to run and with whom. Details of the types of employer engagement activities you can deliver are included in the next section on delivery.

## TOP TIPS

- 1. Ensure all your decisions about employer engagement activities consider the needs of the young people you are targeting.** This includes decisions about the aims, sequencing, timing, length, intensity, location and staff involved in delivery.
- 2. Develop a strategic approach to engaging employers in your provision.** This will help employers see the bigger picture and ensure that requests for their involvement are coordinated across programmes. In turn, this will decrease the likelihood of employer fatigue and ensure they are engaged in activities which are most relevant and beneficial to their business and your young people.
- 3. Involve employers in planning your engagement activities.** This will help to secure buy-in and

ensure that activities are focused, realistic and maximise impact for young people and employers alike.

- 4. Develop a 'brand' or organisation-wide strategy for your employer engagement activity.** This can support buy-in from young people, employers and staff at all levels by raising the profile of the work across the organisation. It can also help staff understand their roles in supporting the achievement of its aims and objectives.

## Factors to consider

Providers who run effective employer engagement provision consider a number of different factors when designing and planning their activities.

### What do you want to achieve?

Clear aims and objectives for your employer engagement activities are key in ensuring that you run the right types of activities for your different learner groups. These should be tailored to the needs and aspirations of the young people you are targeting. Things to consider when setting your aims and objectives include:

- Your strategic priorities and how employer engagement can support these.
- Young people's starting points and what is realistic for them to achieve.
- The outcomes you want to achieve for employers and your relationships with them.

### The target learner cohort

Many of the decisions you make about the design of your employer engagement activities will depend on the learner groups that they are targeted at. Consider:

- What are young people's needs, experience, skills gaps and confidence levels in relation to employment?

- What additional support do young people need?
- Are young people on a wider course/programme? If so, how can employer engagement activities contribute to their learning outcomes?

### Type of activity

There are many different types of employer engagement activities (see the next section on delivering employer engagement activities for more details). Selecting which activities to run and with whom will depend on your learner cohort and the employers you are working with.

When deciding which activities to run with your young people, consider:

- Which activities will address your young people's needs?
- What kinds of activities are most likely to engage and interest your young people?
- Are young people ready to engage in activities with employers, or do they need internal support first?
- What activities are employers able and willing to engage in?
- Do you have relationships with the employers needed for the activities?
- Which employers have the knowledge and skills to deliver/facilitate particular activities with your young people?
- Do your staff have capacity to organise, deliver and review the activities?

### Combination and sequencing of activities

Providers who deliver effective employer engagement provision often deliver multiple work preparation and confidence building activities with young people, in order to prepare them for contact with employers.

This might include team building activities (e.g. building structures out of straws), trips to develop confidence in using transport, role plays, mock interviews and mentoring. Such activities tend to be delivered 'in-house' by staff who young people know and are comfortable with. In these cases, the sequencing and combinations of activities are key in ensuring that young people are prepared to engage with employers and make the most of their experiences.

When deciding on the order in which to run activities, you should consider:

- What level of activity are young people ready to engage in?
- In what order should activities be delivered in order to prepare young people for engagement with external employers?
- How might activities be combined to address young people's needs?
- How do activities relate to young people's wider courses or programmes? Or how will you combine activities to create a coherent programme of employer engagement for young people?

### CASE STUDY

#### The Prince's Trust's 'Team' programme

Team is a personal development programme and is designed to build participants' confidence, reliability, resilience, communication and team work skills. As such, the programme begins with personal development, team building and problem-solving activities which help participants get to know each other. Some of these activities are deliberately fun and light-

hearted, for example, one task was to see which mini-group could build the highest tower from marshmallows and spaghetti. After this initial stage, participants engage in a community project, such as a carpentry and painting project in a local school or a community fundraising project. They then progress into work experience with an external employer.

#### Length and intensity of activities

Shorter and more intensive activities tend to work best for young people studying below Level 2, as they can provide opportunities for quick progression, do not allow time for young people to disengage, and more closely replicate the workplace environment. Employers are also likely to prefer this approach as they will find it easier to commit the time and staff resource required. However, some young people, especially those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), may need activities to be delivered less intensively and over a longer period of time, for example, one day a week over five weeks, instead of a one-week block.

Whilst the needs of the individual young people you are working with should be the starting point for designing all employer engagement activities, you also need to consider employers' capacity to engage. In reality, employers have lots of demands on their time. It's important to remember that private, public and third sector organisations exist to make a profit or deliver a service. Sometimes the time or staff resource that they can commit is limited – it's important to be realistic about this and design activities to maximise the impact of their contribution.

When deciding on the length and intensity of employer engagement activities, consider:

- How long and how often will young people need to engage in an activity in order to achieve the desired outcome?
- How long can young people participate in any one activity before they lose concentration and disengage?
- When do employers have availability and capacity to engage?

### CASE STUDY

#### Spiral

Spiral run a 10-session 'Career Programme' for young people to connect young people with professionals and give them a taste of different careers. The timing, duration and intensity of the weekly sessions are carefully planned to avoid over-working young people or taking up too much of employers' time. Sessions are run on a weekly or fortnightly basis to maintain momentum and effectively build relationships with young people, and each session lasts for two hours so that young people have time to take on a developmental challenge but are not exhausted by the end. The sessions are very fast paced, with no activity lasting longer than 15 minutes. This is effective as it ensures that young people and employers remain engaged and it also replicates the intensity of the workplace.

#### Timing of activities

Ensuring that the timing of activities fits with young people's and employers' capacity is important in ensuring the success of your employer engagement provision.

There are a number of factors to consider in relation to this, including:

- The timetables of young people's wider programmes (if applicable). Try to ensure that activities for young people on a particular course are run when the majority of them will be available.
- Proximity to holiday and exam periods. If you run activities too close to either of these then you will likely have lower attendance and engagement from young people.
- Deadlines Career progression routes for applications to progression opportunities and timing of external/national events. For example, if your young people are likely to be interested in apprenticeships, you could use National Apprenticeship Week as a hook and deliver activities in the run up to deadlines for key

apprenticeship opportunities.

- The other commitments that young people are likely to have. This may depend on your target group and/or their wider programme; for example, if they have children then during school hours may work best, but if they are on a full-time programme then evening or lunch times may be more appropriate.

#### CASE STUDY

##### Barnet and Southgate College

Curriculum staff at Barnet and Southgate College design and run the employer engagement activities that are specific to their curriculum area. This ensures that activities suit the needs of young people and support the achievement of learning outcomes. Curriculum staff consider what skills students will need to develop at particular points

in the academic year, based on their knowledge of the curriculum, and run activities accordingly. Cross-college events, such as a jobs and apprenticeships fair, are organised by the central careers team, although they also consult with curriculum staff to ensure they link with young people's wider programmes.

#### Location of delivery

The location of activities is also an important consideration when designing employer engagement provision. Factors to consider here include:

- Are young people confident enough to engage with employers in the workplace, or do they initially need to do this in an environment that they are familiar and comfortable with?



- Do employers have the capacity, knowledge and skills to host activities in their workplace?
- Will activities have a greater or lesser impact if they are delivered on your site, in the workplace or in another setting (e.g. community-based setting)?

### CASE STUDY

#### Volunteer It Yourself

Volunteer It Yourself's programme engages young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET in two days of trade or DIY work in a community space or building. The aim of the programme is to teach young people trade and construction skills as well as employability skills such as communication, confidence, teamwork and leadership. Basing the project in the community on a real building site means that young people can engage in practical tasks to develop relevant skills, such as painting or carpentry. It also mimics the working environment as closely as possible, to give participants a good understanding of the workplace.

#### Who will deliver?

A range of staff or stakeholders could be involved in delivering employer engagement activities, including staff dedicated to employer engagement; curriculum/programme delivery staff; careers advice staff; employers; and specialist partner organisations. Things to consider when deciding who to involve in the delivery of your activities include:

- Who has the skills and expertise to deliver the activities?
- Who has the skills and expertise to provide any additional support required by young people?

- Are young people ready to engage with an external employer?
- Will activities have a greater impact on young people if they are delivered by an employer?

#### Size of group or activity

Depending on the nature of the activity, you may need to decide how many young people you can accommodate at any one time. When deciding on the size of the group or activity, consider:

- Whether your staff have capacity to organise, deliver and support the activity.
- Whether young people have any additional needs which may require a more individualised approach.
- Whether employers would prefer to work with young people on a one-to-one or group basis.
- Employers' capacity to engage with large groups.

#### Additional support

Young people studying below Level 2 often require additional support to engage effectively in employer activities. The types of support you offer will depend on your learner group, their needs and the extent to which you can meet these in-house. Needs might include low levels of confidence, anxiety, communication difficulties, specific physical disabilities or mental health needs and learning difficulties. Things to consider when planning support for young people include:

- What are the support needs of your young people? How do/will you assess these?
- Can you meet these needs in-house? Do staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and capacity to provide the tailored support required for young people to succeed?

- If not, what partnerships exist with external organisations who can provide this support? Are there any gaps (e.g. in supporting particular groups of young people or addressing particular needs)? If so, how can these be addressed? What local organisations can provide this support?
- Communicate support needs with employers to ensure they are able to provide support and run activities at appropriate level.

### CASE STUDY

#### New College Swindon

When recruiting employers to engage with learners with additional needs, the New College Swindon focuses on those who they have worked with previously and are confident will provide the tailored support that is required. For example, some employers, such as the Co-op, have policies on engaging with diverse group of students, while a number of IT companies focus on engagement activities for young people with Asperger's. For SEND learners, the college works in partnership with the Independent Psychological Service, which provides support workers to work directly with learners. The support workers are involved in preparing the learner for a work placement and liaising with the employer on their behalf, including briefing the employer on the particular support needs of the learner, and accompanying the learner on work experience if necessary.

#### Who to involve

To ensure that your employer engagement activities meet the needs of participants, it is important that you involve young people, employers and staff from across your organisation

in the development and design of activities.

### Staff in your organisation

- **Senior management team:** Engaging senior staff in the design of your employer engagement activities will ensure that your operational planning and delivery fits with business planning and wider organisational priorities. Your organisation may have a senior lead for employer engagement – if so, you should involve them in discussions about the aims and objectives of your activities. Information on attendance, participation, achievement and outcome rates of employer engagement activities should also be fed back to senior management for them to discuss in team meetings. This will help secure senior buy-in to your employer engagement provision.
- **Employer engagement staff:** If your organisation has staff with an employer engagement remit, you should involve them in the design of your activities. Not only will they be able to provide specialist expertise and advice, they will also likely have a good understanding of the needs of the employers that your organisation works with and their capacity to engage in your activities. These staff can act as the key contact for employers and coordinate their involvement in your organisation's engagement activities.
- **Curriculum/delivery staff:** These staff will have an in-depth knowledge of young people's wider courses and programmes and will be able to advise on how activities can support the achievement of learning outcomes and be linked to internal/external timetables

and deadlines. Many also have direct or recent experience of industry and therefore have a good understanding of employers and the types of activities that will benefit young people.

### CASE STUDY

#### London South East Colleges (LSEC)

LSEC has developed a 'Career Advantage' brand for its activities with young people. The Career Advantage framework includes: a main programme of study; tutorials; support to achieve GCSE English and maths; work experience and access to enrichment activities and enhancement courses. Through Career Advantage, students earn 'Advantage Awards' for interactions with employers, skills development within their study programme and for attending employability and enrichment events. Career Advantage is complemented by Employer Advantage, which enables employers who are supporting students to access benefits from the college. The student enrichment team support Career Advantage too, ensuring that the skills developed through extra-curricular activities and hobbies and interests can be evidenced. This brand has been effective in engaging students, tutors and employers in recognising

#### Employers

Working directly with employers will enable you to gain a thorough understanding of their needs, their motivations for engaging and their capacity to participate in activities with your young people. As a result, you will be able to adapt and tailor activities to maximise the benefits that employers gain from engaging, which

will in turn improve young people's experiences.

Key ways to involve employers in the design of your employer activities include:

- **Having a central team of staff dedicated to employer engagement:** Larger providers who deliver effective employer engagement activities tend to have a central team dedicated to coordinating these across their organisation. Smaller providers may consider allocating explicit employer engagement responsibilities to particular delivery or planning staff. These staff can act as key account holder for employers, providing clear lines of communication and involving them in the design and planning of activities. This also supports a coordinated approach to employer engagement, reducing the risk of employer fatigue and increasing the likelihood that employers have a high-quality experience.
- **Gathering employer feedback on activities:** Gathering feedback from employers who engage in your activities is a simple way to identify what works well, what doesn't work so well, and areas for development in future activities. It can also help you identify any gaps in your employer engagement provision, which you can develop further activities to address.
- **One-to-one discussions or visits:** Before an employer participates in an activity, it is good practice to have a one-to-one discussion with them to identify their specific needs and expectations in relation to the activity. This can help you to tailor activities and ensure that employers gain what they need from the experience. It is also

a valuable opportunity to brief employers on young people's needs and levels, so they have realistic expectations and deliver activities at an appropriate level with the necessary support. This two-way information sharing process is important in ensuring that both employers and young people have a positive experience.

- **Review days:** Many providers hold annual review days with the employers they involve in their engagement activities. This provides an opportunity for employers to reflect on what worked well, what could be improved, and shape the activities that will be run during the following year.
- **Engaging with intermediary organisations:** There are many national and local networks and initiatives which aim to engage employers in the work of schools and colleges. These include the STEM Ambassador Network, the Enterprise Adviser Network and the Teach Too programme, but there will likely be more targeted initiatives in your local area that you could take advantage of.
- **Employer forums/advisory boards:** These groups can be an effective way of gathering employers' views and involving them in the design of the whole range of engagement activities your organisation runs across its provision. This more strategic approach can also support the development of employer buy-in to activities, as it helps them see the wider picture and what engagement activities aim to achieve, both for young people and their businesses.

## CASE STUDY

### Derby College

Derby College's vocational courses are all co-created and co-delivered with employers. In 2014/15, an overarching Employers' Strategic Board and 11 Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) were created to formalise the ways in which curriculum staff and employers jointly shape course content and to ensure that the knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours that employers value in the workplace are embedded in employer engagement activities. Around 250 employers are represented on these boards which cover 11 sectors: Business, Construction, Creative Arts, Engineering, Health and Beauty, Health, Social and Dental Care, Hospitality, Land-Based, Public Services, Specialist Construction and Sport.

As well as approaches to involving employers, you will need to think about the messages you use to engage them in designing and delivering your activities. Key messages to use with employers to recruit them to your activities include:

- The development of a **talent pipeline** for their business, which employers can influence by shaping the skills which young people develop.
- The opportunity for employers to **test the skills and suitability of young people** for their workplace before offering them an apprenticeship or job, thereby reducing the risk of recruiting an unsuitable candidate.
- The potential for employers to **address their current skills gaps** by ensuring that new recruits are equipped with these before they

start with the business.

- Activities can provide **Continuing Professional Development opportunities** for employers' staff, as they often involve engaging with groups and in activities that employees may not carry out in their day-to-day roles.
- Employers can often use engagement activities to **promote their own brand, products and services** to young people and teaching staff.
- Employer engagement activities are an effective way of employers meeting their **Corporate Social Responsibility targets**.

### Young people

In order to design and deliver effective employer engagement activities with young people studying below Level 2, it is crucial that you have a thorough understanding of their needs and readiness to engage.

These young people often face a range of barriers to engaging in education, training and employment and will they require tailored activities and support which help them address issues around confidence, low employability skills and a lack of experience of engaging with employers. The most effective way of doing this is to involve young people in the design of activities. This can be achieved through a number of ways:

- **Gathering learner feedback on activities:** As with employers, gathering feedback from young people who engage in your activities is a simple way to identify what works well, what doesn't work so well, and areas for development in future activities. You may do this through feedback forms, focus groups or group discussions, surveys, one-to-one sessions or



use more visual approaches such as display boards, traffic light systems or post-it notes.

- **One-to-one discussions:** Speaking to young people individually prior to their involvement in an activity will enable you to gain an in-depth understanding of their interests, needs and skills gaps in relation to employment and careers. You can then use this information to decide which activities to put young people forward for, or to tailor activities accordingly.
- **Student forums and learner councils:** These groups represent the views of young people and can be an effective way of gaining learner involvement in the design of your employer engagement activities across a range of provision. You could ask for an item on their agenda and canvass their views on what works well and what may be missing from your existing activities, then use this to plan your future provision.
- **Participatory delivery approaches:** An effective way of involving young people in the design of activities is to take a

participatory delivery approach. This involves setting out the objectives or brief for activities, but supporting young people to take ownership and make decisions about the specific tasks they undertake.

#### CASE STUDY

##### Community Learning in Partnership's 'Flare' programme

Flare participants work with the Shooting Fish Theatre Company for half a day per week over four or five months on an enrichment project which is designed to develop literacy and employability skills. With the support of theatre professionals, students write, produce and direct their own play, recruiting actors to play the roles they have created. Job descriptions for assistant theatre roles are produced, e.g. set designer, casting director, producer, lighting engineer. Each young person applies for a role that interests them, attends a job interview and then is paired with a professional doing that job role, so that they develop skills and can complete tasks under supervision. The project comes to fruition with two weeks' full-time work

involving set-building, rehearsals and performances.

#### External partners/stakeholders

Involving external partners and stakeholders in the design of employer engagement activities can also be highly valuable, especially if you are targeting particular groups of young people or taking a sector-specific focus. These organisations can provide advice on or deliver particular aspects of provision, such as specialist support, sector-specific information, advice and guidance (IAG) or activities involving specialist equipment. They may also act as referral organisations to your provision.

#### CASE STUDY

##### Drive Forward Foundation

Drive Forward's current model involves working a clinical psychologist to understand how structural barriers and the impact of childhood trauma can combine to disadvantage young care leavers. The psychologist helps employers to create working environments that further break down remaining barriers. This partnership with a clinical psychologist has informed a new manifesto for the organisation which embeds the values of listening and empathy in all interactions with young people, enabling the charity and its partners to re-assess: how feedback to young people is given; the importance of first contact through gateways to the charity; and training content for mentors and employer partners. Work with the psychologist has also informed the identification of five success factors that encourage reflexive thinking and are now embedded into key activities and one-to-one sessions.

# Delivering effective employer engagement activities

There are a wide range of employer engagement activities that you can deliver with the young people you work with. This section gives information on a range of activities carried out by different providers across the FE sector. It provides an overview of each activity, suggestions for delivery, how it can be effective for young people below Level 2, and ways of tailoring the activity to young people's needs.

## TOP TIPS

1. **Make activities interactive and practical where possible.** This is particularly important for young people below Level 2 who tend to have had poor experiences of school and can therefore be reluctant to engage in writing-based tasks.
2. **Tailor activities to young people's interests and needs.** This is not only important in the planning stages but also throughout delivery, as young people gain the confidence to express their thoughts and opinions.
3. **Fully brief employers on young people's employability skills and support needs.** This ensures they have a realistic expectation of what young people can achieve and enables them to adapt activities to their interests.
4. **Run briefing and reflection sessions with young people before and after activities.** This ensures they are fully prepared to engage and gives them the opportunity to reflect on their learning afterwards and plan their next steps.

## Career or job fairs

**Overview:** Career or job fairs are an effective way of enabling young people to gain a broad understanding of different employment opportunities. They can therefore work well for young people who have not yet chosen a particular technical route and need information about a range of job roles and/or sectors to help them start thinking about their education or career pathway. They can also be effective for young people who are interested in working in a particular sector but have little information about the careers available in this area or how to progress into them.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Career fairs tend to involve employers setting up stands in a large space, such as a hall or reception area, with materials and information about careers in their organisation and/or sector. Young people then walk around the stands and speak to employers, enabling them to quickly gain an understanding of different careers and ask questions of people working in these roles.

### Effective aspects:

- Career fairs can be more effective if they are focused on a particular sector or learner group. This can make the focus of the event clearer and allow young people to gain a more in-depth understanding of a sector they are interested in.
- Inviting alumni from your organisation to run a stand at a career fair can be effective in enabling young people to visualise themselves in a particular role and therefore raise their aspirations. If you do not have appropriate alumni to draw on, you could consider inviting a local ambassador to contribute, such as a STEM Ambassador.

### Tailor to young people's needs by:

- Asking young people which employers they are interested in working for or engaging employers relevant to young people's wider programmes.
- Working with learners prior to the event to brief them on the employers who will be present and develop questions for representatives. You could role play these with learners to increase their confidence in asking them of external employers.
- Walking around with young people who are less confident in speaking to employers. You can help them think of possible questions to ask and encourage them to do so.

## CASE STUDY

### WQE College

A key activity in WQE's employer engagement includes careers and volunteer fairs. These are run during the college's 'careers week' which takes place late in the academic year, when students are starting to think about their next steps. After running general careers fairs involving a range of employers, the college decided to focus events on particular sectors to make them more meaningful and relevant to young people. This has also helped address some gaps in their employer engagement provision; for example, the college ran a Creative Industries careers fair in response to learner feedback that there was little provision for students on these types of courses. Employers bring back students who they recruited the year before to present at the careers fairs, which proves to be very motivating for current students.

## Employer talks

**Overview:** An employer talk can be an effective way of introducing young people to contact with employers. As such, they can be appropriate for young people who lack confidence in engaging directly with employers, or for young people who want to hear employers' personal stories of how they succeeded in a particular sector.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Talks can be carried out in small or large groups or even on a one-to-one basis. Often, employers are invited onto a provider's site to give a talk, but young people could also be taken to a workplace to hear an employer speak.

### Effective aspects:

- Employer talks are particularly effective when they are interactive and provide opportunities for young people to ask questions of employers. This keeps young people engaged and enables them to gain a thorough understanding of a role or sector and the skills and steps needed to work in an area.
- Employer talks can also be easily combined with other activities; for example, an employer could give a talk about their organisation as part of a workplace visit or before running a workshop, carrying out mock interviews with young people or allocating a project brief to a group.

### Tailor to young people's needs by:

- Asking young people which employers they are interested in working for or engaging employers relevant to young people's wider programmes. You should also brief young people on the employer who will be speaking so they can prepare and ask relevant questions.
- Using technology or assistive technology to provide an inclusive



- learning environment or to give young people alternative ways of participating if they are unable to attend in person.
- Supporting employers to adapt presentations and the language used to ensure it is appropriate for young people and tailored to their interests.

## CASE STUDY

### Kingston College

Kingston College runs hour-long career sessions every Monday and Wednesday, during which employers come in to the college to give talks on careers in their industry. When designing the content of employer talks, the college and employers work together to decide what would be most useful for them to discuss. This can often depend on individual employers and their own career paths, as students find it engaging and motivating to hear employers' personal stories of how they overcame barriers to succeed. The college also briefs employers fully on the support individual students

may need. They work with employers to adapt materials, terminology and presentations, which has been much appreciated by employers

## Networking events

**Overview:** Networking events provide opportunities for young people to speak to employers in a relaxed atmosphere. They are similar to career fairs in that they enable young people to gain a broad understanding of a range of different job roles in a short space of time but can allow young people to speak to employers in more depth.

### Suggestions for delivery:

Networking events can be run in a variety of ways. Some providers deliver them during the lunch time period and give young people and employers time to speak to one another over refreshments; others deliver them in a 'speed dating' style, where young people speak to employers on a one-to-one basis for a set amount of time before rotating to the next employer.

**Effective aspects:**

- Networking events can provide young people with contacts in organisations or sectors they are interested in and may lead onto further engagement activities with employers. Many young people studying at below Level 2 do not have access to networks and contact with employers.
- These events are particularly effective if they are focused on a specific sector, as they can provide young people with information and advice about the skills and steps they need to take in order to enter a career of interest to them.

**Tailor to young people’s needs by:**

- Asking young people which employers they are interested in working for or engaging employers relevant to young people’s wider programmes.
- Briefing employers on young people’s abilities and interests prior to the networking event. You should also brief young people on the employers who will be present so they can make the most of the opportunity to speak with them.
- Delivering the event through table discussions in small groups of young people who are less confident in speaking to employers.

**CASE STUDY**

**Oldham Sixth Form College**

An activity which has been particularly successful at Oldham Sixth Form College is employer networking events. The college runs five or six of these sessions a year, each focused on a different sector. Employers are invited into the college and meet with a small group of young people who are interested in pursuing a career in their industry. This enables

participants to ask questions of employers and gain an in-depth understanding of the roles available and skills they need to develop. Crucially, this activity gives employers the opportunity to tell their own stories of how they became successful in their area of work, which can be particularly inspiring for young people.

**Workshops and masterclasses**

**Overview:** Workshops and masterclasses are interactive sessions with employers which showcase the type of work involved in their sector or organisation, for example a chef demonstrating different pastry techniques, or a website developer showcasing basic coding and design. They encourage young people to consider pursuing a career in a particular sector, so are appropriate for young people who are interested in working in that sector or who have not yet decided on a career route and want to explore the options available to them.

**Suggestions for delivery:**

Workshops and masterclasses are often run by employers with small groups of young people. Participants are given fun and interactive tasks to complete or an employer may carry out a demonstration of a particular skills or piece of equipment that they use in their role.

**Effective aspects:**

- The interactive nature of workshops and masterclasses provides an effective platform for employers to engage with young people, as they immediately have a shared experience to discuss.
- Young people studying below Level 2 often enjoy practical activities and so workshops and masterclasses

can provide an opportunity for them to engage in a way which they feel more confident to do, rather than just speaking to employers directly.

**Tailor to young people’s needs by:**

- Working with employers to develop or adapt the content of their sessions to suit young people’s needs and interests.
- Fully briefing young people on the employer’s business so they are prepared to engage and make the most of the workshop or masterclass.
- Engaging with curriculum staff to identify ways in which workshops and masterclasses can be linked into young people’s wider programmes and learning outcomes.

**CASE STUDY**

**Education Business Partnership Kent (EBP Kent)**

EBP Kent runs a programme of preventative provision for young people at risk of becoming NEET. This includes 12 hours of employability skills workshops which focus on building confidence and team working skills, e.g. constructing load bearing towers from coat hangers, paper and paste; a nuclear waste disposal challenge using buckets of water to emulate nuclear waste; and branding a tin can followed by presenting ideas back to the group. The team building workshops are designed jointly by EBP Kent’s delivery team and partner employers and the finance workshops are delivered by NatWest Bank. The content is tailored to young people’s interests as the workshops are delivered.

## Skills events and competitions

**Overview:** Skills events and competitions are interactive activities which involve young people working in teams to complete a task set by employers, who then judge their work. They tend to be sector-specific and aim to encourage young people to consider pursuing a career in a particular industry. They can therefore be appropriate for young people who are interested in a particular sector but perhaps lack the confidence to engage with employers directly.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Skills events and competitions can be large events run at a national or regional level, or smaller local events run within providers or local communities. Employers set practical tasks for teams of young people to complete, for example, building a car, and judge which team completes the task to the highest standard. The winning team is often awarded a prize in recognition of their achievement. Teams or individuals can then be encouraged to enter regional or national skills events, such as WorldSkills UK Competitions.

### Effective aspects:

- The practical nature of the activity often provides young people with a tangible achievement at the end, which can be an effective way of boosting their confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Working in teams as part of a competition helps young people to develop a range of employability skills, including communication, teamwork, time management and organisational skills.
- These activities can be an effective way for young people to showcase their skills to employers and can often lead to further engagement,

including mock interviews, mentoring and work experience.

### Tailor to young people's needs by:

- Exploring with young people which sector a skills event or competition should be focused on.
- Differentiating tasks and activities according to young people's levels and support needs.
- Fully briefing young people on the event prior to their participation, so they are prepared to participate and make the most of the experience.

## CASE STUDY

### Greenpower Education Trust

Greenpower is a UK-based charity which runs an annual international skills competition to inspire young people to pursue study or careers in STEM subjects and to develop employability skills. They run projects with teams of 11-16 year olds, each of which design, build and race an electric car, competing against other teams across the UK and internationally. All projects follow a calendar of race track events from March to October. A team begins a project by ordering their car kit. Greenpower then puts them in contact with one of ambassadors, who spends a day with the team to offer support with their project, and with local employers who act as mentors, spending on average five sessions with the team. Teams participate in monthly car building sessions, followed by a visit to race sites, a transition skills workshop, a practice day at a race track, and then a race day. The practical activity of building a race car is designed to produce tangible results and a real sense of achievement among participants.

## Project/task briefs

**Overview:** This activity involves employers providing young people with 'live' project briefs or genuine commissions for products that their business needs.

**Suggestions for delivery:** This activity is often embedded into young people's wider programmes or courses in order to make these more relevant to the world of work. A live project brief can also form the basis of an entire programme of employer engagement for young people; for example, it could be the reason for an employer talk, workshop or masterclass, or provide opportunities for mentoring. For example, young people could be briefed to design a marketing campaign for a new product.

### Effective aspects:

- Young people will benefit most from this activity if it involves employers who are fully aware of the levels at which young people are studying and their capabilities, set an appropriate task, project or commission for young people, and have realistic expectations of what young people can achieve.
- Working on a 'live' project brief or commission from a real employer boosts young people's engagement with activities, as they can see the value of the work they are doing. It can also provide them with a realistic understanding of the workplace, the types of tasks they will need to undertake and the timeframe in which they will have to undertake them.

### Tailor to young people's needs by:

- Encouraging young people to develop their own plans to meet the project brief where possible. This promotes ownership and enables



young people to develop wider employability skills such as the ability to manage and prioritise work, communication and teamwork.

- Briefing employers on young people's abilities and interests and working with them to develop appropriate projects and commissions for young people.

### CASE STUDY

#### Barking and Dagenham College

Barking and Dagenham College has established a Real Work for Students (RWfS) programme, which enables internal and external clients to submit live project briefs to the college. A subsidiary company (called Aspire) was established through which all the RWfS projects are directed, with a dedicated staff team to help manage

the projects and support the students in meeting the briefs. The briefs are matched to student talent and skills and clear commercial processes and systems have been established – including a Talent Bank resource to log students' involvement and ensure there is a fair spread of opportunity – to ensure that clients' experience is of the highest quality.

### Mentoring

**Overview:** Mentoring involves employers supporting young people on an individual or small group basis over a period of time. This enables employers to provide young people with tailored advice and support to develop their skills and career aspirations. It can therefore be a very useful activity for young people who are interested in working in a

particular sector or career, but can be just as valuable for those who need more general advice about work and employability skills.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Mentoring is often delivered on a provider's site, with employers meeting young people in a safe and familiar environment. However, it can also be combined with other activities, such as work experience or mock interviews, which are undertaken in the workplace. It is important that employers and young people have the opportunity to build a relationship, but the duration and frequency of mentoring sessions can vary according to young people and employers' capacity to engage; the relationship may last for a substantial period of time (for example, the duration of a learner's course or programme) or comprise of only a small number of sessions.

**Effective aspects:**

- Mentoring is most effective when employers are confident in engaging with young people studying below Level 2 and are able to show empathy with them. You may want to consider providing employers with briefings on young people's needs; sharing learners' Individual Learning Plans so that employers can tailor their advice and provide observational evidence of their progress; and training or advice on developing a mentoring relationship prior to their engagement.
- Mentoring can be a highly effective way of providing young people with a thorough understanding of a job role, sector or workplace and the steps they need to take to achieve their career aspirations.

**Tailor to young people's needs by:**

- Matching them with employers depending on their interests and skills or knowledge gaps.
- Adjusting the length and intensity of session depending on young people's levels of engagement and the time they need to maximise the benefits of the mentoring experience.
- Briefing employers on young people's needs and interests beforehand, so they can adapt their advice and the focus of their mentoring accordingly.

**CASE STUDY****Volunteer It Yourself**

Volunteer It Yourself's programme aims to develop young people's employability skills through engagement in practical trade projects, supported by employer-mentors. Participants are mentored by professional tradespeople from

the local area, with at least two mentors overseeing every project. The programme's mentors all have experience of working in a trade and inspire participants by sharing their own experiences and by giving them positive feedback. Mentors receive annual training which covers safeguarding issues and how to support young people with issues such as anxiety. If a mentor is briefed that a particular participant has low confidence or behavioural issues, they will make adjustments, such as spending more one-to-one time with them, and ensuring they treat the young person as if they were an adult employee rather than a school pupil, which often elicits a more positive response from the participants.

**Mock interviews**

**Overview:** Mock interviews involve employers undertaking mock job interviews with young people and providing feedback on their performance. This can help young people practice for real interviews and identify ways in which they can improve their interview skills. This activity is most appropriate for young people who have relatively well-developed employability skills and may soon start looking for real employment opportunities.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Mock interviews tend to be carried out in two different ways. The first emulates a real interview; an employer sits down with a learner and asks them a series of questions within a set period (often around 15 minutes) and then provides detailed feedback on how they can improve their performance. The second takes a 'speed interview' approach and involves a group of young people and employers. In this approach, young people are

interviewed on a one-to-one basis for a short amount of time (e.g. two minutes) before rotating to the next employer. This gives young people experience of being interviewed by different employers and can require them to think quickly and on the spot, much as they would have to in a real interview.

**Effective aspects:**

- The different approaches to delivering mock interviews can be effective for different groups of young people. Speed interviews are appropriate for young people who have little experience of being interviewed as they will give them an idea of different questions and interview techniques. Full mock interviews are more suitable for young people who are ready to start looking for opportunities and would benefit from detailed advice on how to present themselves.
- Feedback from real employers can help young people see where they can improve their techniques and increase their confidence for when they take part in a real job interview.

**Tailor to young people's needs by:**

- Carrying out mock interviews between young people and your own staff before engaging external employers. This gives young people experience of being interviewed by someone they know before taking part in a mock interview with a real employer, which can be a daunting prospect.
- Giving employers different questions to ask during speed interviews, so that young people have to answer a range of questions and gain experience of different interview techniques.

- Carrying out the interviews on your own premises or in an employer's workplace, depending on the level at which your young people are studying and their readiness to engage.

### CASE STUDY

#### New College Swindon

Mock and speed interviews are key activities that New College Swindon runs with its young people to prepare them for work experience. Mock interviews generally involve each student in an interview with just one employer, for a longer length of time, and in this way more closely resembles a real interview. In comparison, speed interviews involve students rotating around tables at which employers are sat, spending two minutes with each employer in a mini-interview before moving on to the next employer. This format allows students to gain a breadth of experience of different interview styles and questions in a short space of time and helps them learn how to think quickly in an interview situation.

#### Work experience

**Overview:** Work experience involves young people carrying out a role in a workplace (either with an external employer or in your own organisation) to gain experience and understanding of the world of work. This activity is often seen as the 'pinnacle' of employer engagement and is appropriate for young people who have the employability skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for the workplace.

**Suggestions for delivery:** Work experience can take place in external employers or your own organisation, depending on young people's readiness to engage in the workplace.

It tends to last for a week or the equivalent amount of time spread over a longer period. Providing young people with employability skills and work preparation training before work experience can help them make the most of their placement and ensure they and the employer have a positive experience. Both young people and employers are likely to need wraparound support to ensure that the work experience is a success. Arrange regular contact with both parties to check on progress and ensure that young people and employers can contact you if any problems occur.

#### Effective aspects:

- Work experience is consistently viewed as the most effective way of enabling young people to gain a real insight into the world of work. In order to ensure this, work with employers to identify or develop meaningful roles for young people which contribute to their business. Otherwise, the placement can feel like a tokenistic gesture to young people and they may disengage.
- Providing opportunities for young people to work in different areas of an organisation throughout their work experience can enable them to gain a greater awareness of the range of roles available within a sector or type of organisation, helping them to clarify their career aspirations.

#### Tailor to young people's needs by:

- Sourcing internal work experience for young people who are not yet ready to engage in work experience with an external employer.
- Being flexible on the duration and intensity of work experience for young people with additional needs; for example, young people may benefit from engaging in half

a day of work experience with an employer over the course of 10 weeks, rather than in a one-week block.

- Encouraging young people to source their own work experience with employers in sectors they are interested in. However, young people studying below Level 2 may not have the contacts needed to source appropriate work experience and may need support with this.
- Briefing employers on young people's support needs and capabilities prior to work experience, so they have realistic expectations about what young people can achieve.

### CASE STUDY

#### Bishop Burton College

A key feature of Bishop Burton College's Level 1 Animal Management course is the opportunity for group work experience which is supervised by tutors. This was introduced to the programme to address the fact that many of the students are unlikely to succeed in individual work experience, since most have a wide range of personal needs, such as communication difficulties and anger management issues, and are not used to mixing with people. Another factor is that it is very competitive to secure work experience placements for animal management students so it tends to only be the most able who are successful. By running group work experience as an alternative, the college helps students prepare for Level 2 when they would be expected to undertake work experience on their own.

# Evaluating employer engagement activities

**Robust monitoring and evaluation of your employer engagement activities is crucial. Without this, it will be difficult for you to evidence the difference that your activities make or to know which activities are most effective for which young people and employers.**

There are two key elements to a robust evaluation. The first evaluates your processes for planning and delivering employer engagement activities; the second evaluates the outcomes and impact arising from them.

## TOP TIPS

- 1. Embed evaluation throughout your employer engagement activities.** This will enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes and impact of your activities, supporting the continuous improvement of your employer engagement provision.
- 2. Use different evaluation methods to suit your young people, employers and the activities you deliver.** This will make sure you get the information you need for a robust evaluation of your employer engagement provision.

## Evaluating the processes of your activities

The aim of a process evaluation is to identify what works well in the design and delivery of your activities, and what can be improved. It enables you to identify what works and for whom, areas for improvement and where to focus your resources in order to maximise the benefits to young people, employers and your own organisation. As such, a process evaluation contributes to the continuous improvement of your

employer engagement provision and feeds back into the design, planning and delivery of your activities.

To make sure your process evaluation is robust, you should develop an evaluation plan. This will ensure that your evaluation is embedded in your programme and captures the information you need.

The plan should include three broad elements:

- 1. What you will be evaluating.**  
In general, you will be evaluating the effectiveness of your employer engagement activities in supporting young people to progress to further learning and/or employment opportunities. However, there might be some specific aspects of your activities that you want to focus on. Think about what it is that you want to find out – what do you want to be able to say at the end of your evaluation? Having clear aims and objectives at this stage will ensure that your evaluation is robust and thorough.
- 2. How you will evaluate it.**  
Now think about how you will carry out your evaluation. Who do you need to involve in your evaluation? What methods will you use to evaluate your activities? Which methods will you use with which stakeholders? Will these give you the information you need? How can you adapt them to different groups' needs?
- 3. When you will evaluate it.**  
The most robust evaluations will be embedded and gather information at key points throughout a programme. Don't just think about the delivery of your activities – consider the design and planning stages too. What do employers think of the ways you involve them

in designing activities? Do young people have suggestions about different ways they can be involved at this stage?

## Possible evaluation methods

### Feedback forms and surveys:

A common way of gathering information about what worked well for participants is through feedback forms. These can be used with young people, employers and other stakeholders involved in designing and delivering employer engagement activities. They tend to be quite 'light touch' and ask what participants enjoyed, what they found most useful and any ways in which the activities could be improved. They can be paper-based or online and be distributed at the end of activities or just after. Often, they include a mixed of open (comment box) and closed (tick box) questions.

**Surveys:** Post-event surveys can be distributed to young people, employers and other participants after the event to capture their reflections on what went well, what could have been improved and what they plan to do as a result of the activity. These are very similar to feedback forms but tend to be sent out further after activities, to capture any changes participants have experienced. They can be done online, but providers tend to find that paper-based surveys get higher response rates.

**Reflection sessions:** This method gathers more in-depth and detailed feedback from participants. Reflection sessions can be carried out on a one-to-one or group basis and involve young people, employers and other stakeholders in discussions about what worked well, what could be improved and what difference the activities made. They tend to be carried out at the end of employer

engagement programmes but can also be conducted throughout, to feed into the ongoing design and planning of activities.

**Traffic light/post-it note activities:** Young people studying below Level 2 may be reluctant to complete feedback forms or surveys, so more visual and colourful approaches might be required. Two simple methods that can work well with these young people are 'traffic lights', which ask young people to rate elements of an activity as red, amber or green, and post-it note activities, where young people write a comment on a post-it and stick it on a board relating to an aspect of an activity. These quick feedback methods can provide you with some useful information about what young people enjoyed but are unlikely to provide you with detailed feedback.

### **Capturing the outcomes and impact of your activities**

The second strand of a robust evaluation aims to capture the outcomes and impacts of any activity. This is different from the process evaluation as it aims to establish the difference your activities made and how, not just what went well and which elements participants enjoyed (although the process evaluation can feed into this). In particular, it aims to identify which aspects of activities result in outcomes for participants, which can inform your planning for future activities.

This section includes some suggested methods to capture the difference your employer engagement activities make to young people, employers and your own organisation.

### **For young people:**

#### **Robust tracking of participants:**

Keeping a clear record of who engages in which of your activities can enable you to monitor the difference your employer engagement makes. A centralised and transparent approach to tracking learners' progression is often required by awarding bodies and is considered to be good practice by Ofsted. Following young people's participation, check if there are any changes in their attendance or achievement rates and compare their retention rates and progression outcomes against similar cohorts who did not participate. This will demonstrate whether your activities make any difference to young people and also identify any direct outcomes e.g. offers of work experience, apprenticeship or employment, of their participation.

#### **Pre- and post-activity measures of skills and competencies:**

Many providers ask young people about changes in their skills and confidence at the end of activities, but the most robust way of capturing this is by measuring young people's confidence, soft skills and technical skills prior to and following their involvement in employer activities. In this way, you will be able to see the direct impact of your activities. Ways of measuring young people's skills include soft skills and learning styles questionnaires, work-readiness assessments and personality profiling, which can be run by tutors and or completed independently by young people (e.g. a short survey which asks young people to rate their confidence/skills on a scale of 1 to 10). It is important that young people undertake the same assessment at the beginning and end of activities, to show their distance travelled. These assessments can be built into preparation and reflection sessions.



## CASE STUDY

### ThinkForward

Experience and progression of young people is measured using the 'Ready for Work' scale which includes the skills and attributes that employers are looking for when employing young people. Seven key employability skills form the core of the evaluative model: self-aware; receptive; driven; self-assured; resilient; a good communicator; and organised. Across each of these attributes, the young person is formally scored using a descriptive scale which is numbered from 1 to 10 to allow for quantitative analysis. Formal review points happen three times per term, but the tool is frequently used to help students understand how specific activities and experiences have impacted on their work readiness. Statistical and anecdotal evidence shows that ThinkForward increases 'work readiness.' Within a couple of years, the evidence base will be able to show how successful the programme has been in preventing NEET outcomes at age 18.

**Embedded activities:** You can embed evaluation activities into your employer engagement programmes. This could include asking young people to complete workbooks or journals (or include a section on work experience in young people's learning logs) which ask for their reflections on activities and what they have gained from them; create display boards about what they have learned and the difference it has; or prepare and deliver a presentation on their learning and the benefits they have experienced. These methods can collect rich information on young people's experiences and the difference particular activities make.

They can also provide opportunities for young people to develop further skills, such as writing, presentation and communication skills.

## CASE STUDY

### St Vincent Sixth Form College

Assessment of work experience below Level 2 comprises workbook entries and self-evaluation questions that young people complete, written feedback from the employer, and, for young people with Learning Support Assistants, observations from their LSA. Young people's workbooks require them to provide feedback on personal development they have achieved through the experience, including what they have learnt, and what they would like to do in the future. Workbook entries are recorded on the college's Pro Monitor system which holds a record for every student, including specific work experience components that are completed before and after a placement.

**Reflection sessions:** As well as working well for your process evaluation, reflection sessions can be a valuable opportunity to explore what difference activities have made to young people's lives. Crucially, they will enable you to explore which activities or aspects of activities have contributed to outcomes and any ways in which this can be developed in future activities.

## CASE STUDY

### London South East Colleges (LSEC)

Students evidence their own skills and achievements using an App called Kloodle. Kloodle enables students to 'tag' the development of 25 skills

within the four clusters. The skills tags are linked to students' Kloodle profile pages, thereby creating a digital CV and portfolio of evidenced skills and participation in 'employability events', some of which are generic and others bespoke to each vocational course or work with an individual employer. Students have the opportunity to meet with their tutor to review their skills profile every 4-6 weeks, reflecting on prior activity and setting development targets for the future.

### For employers:

#### Pre- and post-activity measures:

As with young people, capturing employers' start and end points can be an effective way of evidencing the difference your engagement activities make. These measures might include employers' views of young people and their skills, their confidence to engage with young people, and any changes in their perceived skills gaps and needs. They could be captured through short feedback forms and surveys or completed as part of preparation and reflection sessions with delivery staff.

**Reflection sessions:** Reflection sessions with employers, run on either an individual or group basis, can be an effective way of gaining in-depth feedback from employers on the outcomes and benefits they experience as a result of engaging in activities. They can enable you to explore which aspects of activities benefitted them most and why, and you can identify whether there is any difference in the experiences of employers depending on their sector, size or location.

#### For own organisation:

As well as benefitting young people and employers, your employer engagement activities are likely



to result in outcomes for your organisation. This is often neglected in providers' evaluations but it is important to capture these outcomes so they can be reported back to senior management and secure further buy-in for your activities.

**Monitor changes in learner data:** Improvements in attendance, retention, achievement and progression rates is a positive outcome for your organisation and will be appreciated by your senior management team. It can help you build evidence of the work you are doing to address the needs of young people studying below Level 2 and with high needs, which is a key consideration for Ofsted. Monitor these rates of participants and compare them against similar cohorts who did not participate to see if your activities are making a difference in these areas.

**Monitor changes in engagement from employers:**

This may be measured through the number and range of employers willing to participate in your activities, receipt of funding or sponsorship for activities, and invitations for your organisation to contribute to local events with employers. You should establish processes for capturing and monitoring levels of engagement from employers.

**External evaluation:** If you want a robust and objective evaluation of your employer engagement activities, you may want to consider commissioning an external evaluation. This could be particularly useful if you are delivering a substantial programme of employer engagement or want robust evidence to support funding and project proposals.

**CASE STUDY**

**Greenpower Education Trust**

Outcomes are measured through independent evaluations conducted by external researchers, involving participants, parents and teachers before and after participation in the programme. These evaluations have gathered quantitative evidence that the practical activities run as part of the project enable participants to develop their communication, teamwork skills and confidence, because they are working with others who share their enthusiasm for the project.

# Top tips

This section summarises our ten top tips for designing, delivering and evaluating employer engagement activities for young people studying below Level 2.

## For design:

1.

**Ensure all your decisions about employer engagement activities consider the needs of the young people you are targeting.** This includes decisions about the aims, sequencing, timing, length, intensity, location and staff involved in delivery.

2.

**Develop a strategic approach to engaging employers in your provision.** This will help employers see the bigger picture and ensure that requests for their involvement are coordinated across programmes. In turn, this will decrease the likelihood of employer fatigue and ensure they are engaged in activities which are most relevant and beneficial to their business and your young people.

3.

**Involve employers in planning your engagement activities.** This will help to secure buy-in and ensure that activities are focused, realistic and maximise impact for young people and employers alike.

4.

**Develop a 'brand' or organisation-wide strategy for your employer engagement activity.** This can support buy-in from young people, employers and staff at all levels by raising the profile of the work across the organisation. It can also help staff understand their roles in supporting the achievement of its aims and objectives.

## For delivery:

5.

**Make activities interactive and practical where possible.** This is particularly important for young people below Level 2 who tend to have had poor experiences of school and can therefore be reluctant to engage in writing-based tasks.

6.

**Tailor activities to young people's interests and needs.** This is not only important in the planning stages but also throughout delivery, as young people gain the confidence to express their thoughts and opinions.

7.

**Fully brief employers on young people's levels and support needs.** This ensures they have a realistic expectation of what young people can achieve and enables them to adapt activities to their interests.

8.

**Run briefing and reflection sessions with young people before and after activities.** This ensures they are fully prepared to engage and gives them the opportunity to reflect on their learning afterwards and plan their next steps.

## For evaluation:

9.

**Embed evaluation throughout your employer engagement activities.** This will enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes and impact of your activities, supporting the continuous improvement of your employer engagement provision.

10.

**Use different evaluation methods to suit your young people, employers and the activities you deliver.** This will make sure you get the information you need for a robust evaluation of your employer engagement provision.

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