

SEPTEMBER 2025 – JULY 2026

MODERN **WORK EXPERIENCE** IN PRACTICE



Real examples and practical ideas from employers and schools across Cumbria



Cumbria CAREERS HUB | CUMBRIA COMBINED AUTHORITY | THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

MODERN WORK **EXPERIENCE**

Traditionally, work experience has often meant one placement with one employer, usually for a week in Year 10 or Year 12. While this has worked well for some young people, the quality of experiences and access to opportunities can vary considerably.





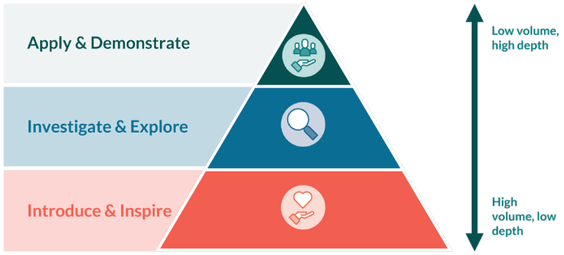
Modern Work Experience is different

Modern Work Experience aims to give every young person access to 2 weeks' worth of multiple, high-quality workplace experiences across their secondary education.

Starting in Year 7, these experiences build progressively and give young people opportunities to:

- explore different workplaces, sectors and careers;
- meet employers and employees;
- understand the skills and behaviours employers value;
- apply their learning through workplace tasks and challenges; and
- reflect on their progress and build confidence.

Experiences can take different forms and vary in length. What matters is that each has a clear purpose, defined learning outcomes and meaningful interaction with employers.



A progressive journey

Modern Work Experience is about more than increasing the number of days young people spend in workplaces. It creates a connected journey, with different experiences and employers building young people's knowledge, skills and confidence from Year 7 onwards.

This helps young people make informed choices and prepare for their next steps.



Learning through delivery in Cumbria

During the 2025/26 academic year, Cumbria Careers Hub worked with 15 schools and 53 employers to pilot different approaches to Modern Work Experience.

The pilots used the equalex framework and a shared definition of a meaningful experience to give each activity a clear purpose.

equalex is a national framework developed by The Careers & Enterprise Company. It provides a common language for young people, employers, schools and colleges, helping them understand what high-quality workplace experiences look like and how learning progresses over time.

Think of equalex as a map for the young person's journey. Each experience helps them develop the knowledge, skills, behaviours and confidence they need for future learning and employment.

Progress can be captured through young people's reflections, completed tasks, employer feedback, skills assessments and portfolios. This helps schools and colleges demonstrate impact, while showing employers how their contribution supports a young person's wider development.

The key question:
What will the young person know, understand or be able to do as a result of this experience?

Starting with this question can turn even a short activity into a valuable part of a young person's Modern Work Experience journey.

What makes an experience meaningful?

A meaningful workplace experience helps young people explore careers, understand the world of work and recognise the skills and behaviours employers value.

Employers can create a meaningful experience by:

- Agreeing a clear purpose and learning outcomes;
- Providing genuine two-way interaction with employees;
- Introducing different roles and career routes;
- Setting a real or realistic workplace task or challenge;
- Providing constructive feedback; and
- Allowing time for reflection and learning.

This could involve opening the workplace to young people, setting an employer-led project, involving employees from different teams or providing a longer placement.

Every meaningful experience can help a young person make informed choices and see where their skills could take them.



Ideas You Can Adapt

The following case studies show how employers and schools have delivered Modern Work Experience across different sectors and settings. They offer practical ideas rather than fixed templates.

Each case study explains:

- the opportunity identified;
- what the employer and school delivered;
- the difference it made for young people;
- what the employer gained; and
- how another organisation could adapt the approach.

Whether you can offer two hours, half a day, a workplace project or an extended placement, your organisation can make a valuable contribution.





A WORKPLACE VISIT THAT **ENGAGED YEAR 11 BOYS**

How Morgan Sindall used a live construction project to inspire Year 11 students at Appleby Grammar School

THE OPPORTUNITY

A small group of students who needed extra support to stay engaged in learning until their exams, visited the on-site school rebuild project. The experience connected curriculum subjects with real jobs, workplace expectations, and explored the range of routes into construction.

8 students took part

***100%** secured or planned positive post-16 destinations*

What the employer delivered

- A warm welcome, site induction, PPE briefing and clear safety expectations.
- A guided tour showing foundations, ground preparation and how a major project is managed.
- Exposure to site facilities, staff wellbeing and the professional standards expected at work.
- A live online meeting with designers, demonstrating how different teams collaborate.
- An honest question-and-answer session about roles, entry routes, apprenticeships and career journeys.

The difference it made

- Students reported greater awareness of career options, including roles they had not previously considered.
- School observations showed stronger engagement in exams, revision, careers conversations and future planning.
- Students developed a clearer understanding of workplace behaviours` including teamwork, time management and health & safety.
- The partnership created a platform for further site visits, virtual experiences, and curriculum-linked projects.

> ***"The young people really benefited from the experience in terms of understanding what their options might be for a career in the construction sector."*** – MORGAN SINDALL

Why it worked

- The activity was authentic: students observed real work taking place, not a simulated task.
- Staff translated technical processes into clear, accessible explanations and invited questions.
- The visit linked directly to Maths, English and Design Technology, helping students see why learning matters and highlighted the transferability of the skills learned in the classroom into the workplace
- The group was small enough for meaningful conversations and personalised support.

What the employer gained

- A practical opportunity to showcase hard-to-fill and less visible roles across the business.
- Early engagement with potential apprentices and local talent.
- An activity that strengthened links with the school and supported social value commitments.
- A repeatable model that can involve site, office, technical and support teams.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the students, intended outcomes and any support needs with the school.

2 Build a simple experience
Combine a welcome, safety briefing, workplace tour, staff encounters and a practical insight.

3 Make careers visible
Show the variety of roles, routes and skills, including jobs beyond the most obvious ones.

4 Keep the door open
Offer a follow-up such as a virtual session, project brief, return visit or apprenticeship talk.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need a large programme. A well-planned half-day visit, delivered with the school and focused on real work, can open up careers and strengthen your future talent pipeline.

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A CREATIVE CAREERS ROADSHOW **RIGHT ON THE DOORSTEP**

How three Barrow creative organisations shared delivery to inspire Year 8 students from Furness Academy

THE OPPORTUNITY

Fifteen Year 8 students interested in creative careers walked between Signal Film and Media, Art Gene and Full of Noises. Each organisation contributed a focused, hands-on session, creating a coherent day that showcased film, curation, music, events, technical production and creative business roles.

15 Year 8 students took part

***5/5 school rating** for organisation and delivery*

What the employer delivered

- A walking roadshow linking three creative organisations in Barrow, removing the transport costs and keeping delivery local.
- At Signal Film and Media, students created a short film and experienced directing, producing, acting, story development and behind-the-scenes production.
- At Art Gene, students explored an exhibition through the eyes of a curator and considered how artworks, space and interpretation fit together.
- At Full of Noises, students planned a Barrow concert by considering artists, audiences, costs, venues, travel and local preferences.
- All 3 experiences included tours, Q&A sessions and practical tasks highlighting routes into film, arts, music, events, marketing, administration and technical production.

The difference it made

- Students identified creative roles and local organisations they had not previously known existed.
- Follow-up feedback showed a stronger understanding of local opportunities and willingness to consider a wider range of jobs.
- Students reported using and developing teamwork, planning, creativity, listening, speaking and problem-solving skills.
- All three organisations expressed interest in future involvement, while Cumbria Arts and Culture Network provides a route for replication across Cumbria.

> ***"I didn't realise you could do art as a job. I thought it was a hobby!"*** – STUDENT FEEDBACK

Why it worked

- Each organisation offered a genuine mini-project, giving students responsibility and insight rather than a passive tour.
- The school, employers, Cumbria Arts and Culture Network and Careers Hub co-designed the sequence and shared learning outcomes.
- The roadshow helped students see how teamwork, planning, creativity, communication, and problem solving operate across the sector.
- Walking-distance delivery and one teacher with two support staff made the model accessible for all learners.

What the employer gained

- A practical way for creative SMEs and third-sector organisations to showcase roles without hosting individual students for a full day/ week.
- Early engagement with local audiences, participants, volunteers and potential future creative-sector talent.
- Stronger school and community connections increased organisational visibility and inclusive access for priority learners.
- A shared-delivery model where each organisation concentrates staff time into one high-quality session for 15 to 20 students.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Choose a sector, learner group, and clear outcomes. Map several nearby organisations and agree access, staffing and support needs.

2 Build a simple experience
Ask each organisation to deliver one tour, employee encounter and genuine mini project linked to workplace roles.

3 Make careers visible
Ensure sessions are linked and progressive, demonstrating the breadth of roles, skills and career pathways available across the organisation.

4 Keep the door open
Build in protected reflection and evaluation time, then offer workshops, volunteering, older-student placements or return visits.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?

START A CONVERSATION
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CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree learner interests, intended outcomes, communication needs and reasonable adjustments with the school.

2 Build a simple experience
Use visual information, a short tour, staff encounters and practical activities that engage different learners.

3 Make careers visible
Show clinical and non-clinical roles, entry-level opportunities, apprenticeships and supported internship routes.

4 Keep the door open
Offer a return visit, college link, supported internship conversation or activity with another department.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need specialist SEND expertise to begin. A co-designed half-day visit, with clear information, practical activities and school support, can remove barriers and introduce learners to your workplace and future opportunities.

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DESIGNING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES IN HEALTHCARE

How University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust co-designed an inclusive careers visit to Furness General with George Hastwell SEND School

THE OPPORTUNITY

Year 10 and 11 learners with a range of additional needs visited Furness General Hospital for a practical introduction to careers within the NHS. The experience was co-designed around learner interests, communication needs and preparation for adulthood outcomes.

100% wanted more workplace visits

***67%** would now consider working in a hospital*

What the employer delivered

- Supported learners to experience a real workplace journey and develop independent travel skills.
- A short, visual presentation using videos, movement and an interactive quiz to introduce hospital careers.
- A question-and-answer session with a nurse focused on teamwork and the contribution of every role.
- Showcased a range of clinical and frontline roles through hands-on demonstrations of uniforms, equipment and workplace tools.
- Provided learners with direct exposure to a live healthcare environment through a guided ward tour and practical activities.

The difference it made

- All learners identified employability skills needed in a hospital, including communication, teamwork and problem solving.
- All learners said they would like to take part in more workplace visits.
- Two-thirds said they would like to work in a hospital in the future.
- Learners gained first-hand awareness of clinical and non-clinical roles and the routes into them.

"Being able to familiarise students with the hospital environment where they may feel uncomfortable was just as important as the career aspects."

– UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS OF MORECAMBE BAY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Why it worked

- The school and employer co-designed the visit around individual interests, abilities and support needs.
- Visual, practical, and interactive activities reduced reliance on lengthy verbal explanations.
- Familiarising learners with the hospital environment supported confidence as well as careers learning.
- Staff highlighted realistic progression routes, including apprenticeships, supported internships, and entry-level roles.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to showcase the breadth of NHS roles and increase awareness of less visible career routes.
- Positive staff engagement and an opportunity to strengthen the future local talent pipeline.
- A stronger relationship with the school and Cumbria Careers Hub, supporting widening participation.
- A scalable model that could involve additional departments, awareness campaigns and further SEND groups.

CREATING CONFIDENCE BEFORE THE WORKPLACE VISIT

How Kier Construction created a meaningful site experience for learners from The Gillford Centre

THE OPPORTUNITY

Learners from an Alternative Provision setting explored construction and infrastructure careers at Brampton Wastewater Treatment Works. Employer contact before the visit, careful preparation and small-group support helped learners engage confidently with a live workplace.

100% said it influenced career ideas

***75%** showed interest in engineering, plant or site-based careers*

What the employer delivered

- An initial meeting at the school's World of Work event, giving the employer time to understand the learners and build familiarity.
- A formal site induction, health and safety briefing, full six-point PPE and a supported visit to a live infrastructure project.
- Guided tour explaining civil engineering work, the purpose of the project, and workplace expectations.
- Direct conversations with Kier, United Utilities and construction staff, including machine operators demonstrating excavators and dumpers.
- A structured worksheet and a relatable employee story that prompted questions about qualifications, routes into work and progression.

The difference it made

- Every participating learner said the experience had influenced future career ideas.
- Three-quarters expressed interest in engineering, construction plant operation or related site-based careers.
- 75% reported effective communication, teamwork, motivation, and a willingness to improve during the visit.
- Learners demonstrated workplace readiness by following site procedures and adapting to full PPE in warm conditions.

"Getting to sit on the machines and hearing about what jobs I could do with the machines." –

LEARNER FEEDBACK

Why it worked

- Trust was built before the visit, helping learners process what would happen and reducing the uncertainty of a new environment.
- The school openly shared likely attendance and support needs, allowing the employer to plan flexibly without lowering expectations.
- Small groups, enabling close staff support, and practical activities, made the experience accessible to all learners.
- The employer used authentic staff stories and hands-on machinery encounters to create relevance and aspiration.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to demonstrate construction, engineering and utilities roles to young people who may not access traditional work experience.
- Stronger links with potential future talent and an opportunity to challenge assumptions about Alternative Provision learners.
- Meaningful evidence of social value through inclusive engagement with vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- Positive staff engagement, including an employee who wanted to support further activities after sharing a personal career journey.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Visit the school first. Understand learner needs, likely barriers, interests and the support available on the day.

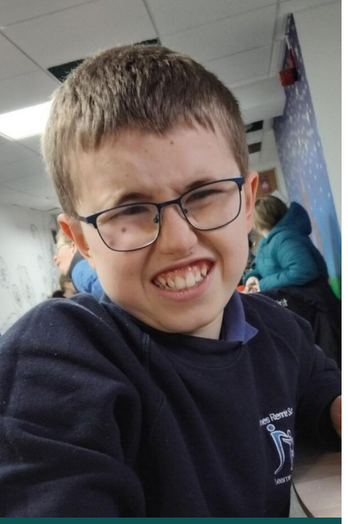
2 Build a simple experience
Build familiarity first through a school visit, short talk, practical workshop or pre-visit briefing with the same employer contact.

3 Make careers visible
Keep the workplace experience structured: induction, practical encounters, employee stories, questions and a simple learning task.

4 Keep the door open
Expect attendance to fluctuate. Use small groups or reserve places, then offer a follow-up visit, mentoring or careers activity.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need to manage the challenges alone. Work with the school and Cumbria Careers Hub, build trust before the visit and provide an authentic experience. A few hours can influence career ideas and help learners picture themselves in your industry.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub



SMALL PRACTICAL TASKS OPENING THE WORKPLACE TO EVERY LEARNER.

How four local employers created meaningful workplace experiences with James Rennie SEND School

THE OPPORTUNITY

Around 20 Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils explored work through accessible activities with Susan's Farm, Cranstons Food Hall, the Post Office and RESTORE. Genuine workplace tasks were adapted around communication, mobility, sensory and medical needs.

20 pupils took part

4 local employers opened up different sectors and roles

What the employer delivered

- Real retail tasks at Cranstons, including arranging flowers, pricing products, stocking shelves and using the till with support.
- Outdoor work at Susan's Farm, where pupils fed animals and harvested vegetables while learning about agriculture and food production.
- A community activity with the Post Office, linking classroom letter writing to posting letters in a real local workplace.
- Repeated visits to RESTORE, with authentic tasks such as sorting stock, matching items, preparing displays and making purchases independently.
- A flexible mix of workplace visits and school-based activities so pupils could participate at an appropriate level and pace.

The difference it made

- Pupils explored agriculture, food retail, postal services and the charity sector through direct experience.
- School staff observed greater confidence when entering unfamiliar environments, meeting new people and completing workplace tasks.
- Pupils developed a range of skills including communication, teamwork, responsibility, problem solving, independence, and handling money.
- The school plans to extend this curriculum-linked model so all classes can access employer engagement in future delivery.

"Being a shop keeper is fun."

– *PUPIL FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- Employers offered genuine, useful hands on tasks rather than observation-only visits, helping pupils experience contribution and achievement.
- Tasks were broken into manageable steps and matched to pupils' abilities, interests, communication methods and support needs.
- Activities connected with literacy, numeracy, communication, independence and preparation for adulthood.
- Adaptations such as quiet spaces, accessible routes, supported till use and nearby venues removed barriers without removing purpose.

What the employer gained

- A practical route to include young people with a range of learning difficulties in authentic workplace activity.
- A chance for employees to strengthen communication, task design and inclusive working practices.
- Visible local social value through sustained partnerships, community participation, and preparation for adulthood.
- A flexible model that can begin with one small task, an in-school activity or a short visit, then grow over time.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Plan with the school. Understand communication, mobility, sensory, medical and staffing needs, plus what each learner can enjoy and achieve.

2 Build a simple experience
Choose genuine tasks that can be broken into clear steps, such as sorting, stocking, preparing, serving, packing or caring for resources.

3 Make careers visible
Adapt the environment, not the purpose. Consider quiet spaces, accessible routes, visual instructions, shorter sessions and supported equipment use.

4 Keep the door open
Build continuity through return visits, tasks completed at school, employer visits into class or a longer curriculum-linked project.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
Start with one meaningful task and plan it with the school. With the right adjustments, learners with complex needs can contribute to real work, develop independence and discover environments that may shape future transitions.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub

OPENING DIGITAL CAREERS TO SEND LEARNERS

How LEVELS Whitehaven used AI, VR and gaming to inspire Year 10 students from Mayfield School

THE OPPORTUNITY

Seven Year 10 students with Special Education Needs (SEND) explored a real digital workplace through gaming, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality and creative challenges. The accessible experience helped learners connect personal interests with future roles in technology, IT and creative media.

7 Year 10 students took part

100% enjoyed the experience and wanted similar opportunities

What the employer delivered

- A welcoming introduction to a live digital technology, gaming, AI and creative-media workplace.
- Hands-on use of Virtual Reality, including 360-degree videos that opened up different jobs and workplaces.
- Demonstrations of Artificial Intelligence and digital tools used in modern working environments.
- Collaborative challenges that developed communication, teamwork, problem solving and independence.
- Direct interaction with LEVELS staff, plus reflection on strengths, interests and possible digital career pathways.

The difference it made

- Learners identified interests in game testing and design, IT and computer repair, art and media, and helping professions.
- Staff reported improved workplace understanding, future-career inspiration, motivation and confidence.
- Learners developed communication, teamwork, problem-solving, independence and confidence through shared challenges.
- The employer confirmed a willingness to host again and to launch additional available dates.

"I liked how I could do everything. I could join in with all the activities. I enjoyed the gaming setup the most." – STUDENT FEEDBACK

Why it worked

- The employer created an inclusive environment where all learners could participate at their own pace.
- The day was segmented into shorter activities, practical demonstrations and real-world tasks to sustain engagement.
- Technology was used as an accessible bridge into careers that many learners had not previously considered.
- Activities were informed by learner interests and supported by school staff, with attention to communication and medical needs.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to show how gaming, AI, IT, design and customer-facing skills connect to real jobs.
- Early engagement with young people whose talent and interests may be missed by traditional placement models.
- A scalable social-value activity that supports inclusion without requiring a long individual placement.
- Positive staff engagement and a stronger partnership with Mayfield School and Cumbria Careers Hub.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Start with learner interests, strengths and support needs. Agree pacing, breaks, medical arrangements and communication approaches.

2 Build a simple experience
Create short, varied activities using demonstrations, accessible technology, team challenges and real workplace tasks.

3 Make careers visible
Name the jobs clearly. Explain how each activity links to roles, qualifications, apprenticeships and attainable next steps.

4 Keep the door open
Build progression through a return visit, employer-led project, virtual simulation, mentoring or a supported placement.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need to offer a traditional week-long placement. A structured workplace visit with inclusive technology, real tasks and clear career links can build confidence, widen aspirations and introduce your organisation to future talent.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub

Cumberland Council

A WORKPLACE SAFARI THAT BROADENS AMBITION

How Cumberland Council introduced Netherhall students to careers across one large organisation

THE OPPORTUNITY

High-attaining Year 9 students visited Cumbria House for a mini workplace safari. By meeting teams from across Cumberland Council, students discovered local careers in business, digital, engineering, public services and infrastructure, while connecting school achievement with future choice.

7/8 would consider a wider range of jobs

5/8 said they knew much more about Council careers

What the employer delivered

- A guided tour of Cumbria House and an introduction from the Early Careers and Apprenticeship Team.
- Two half-day visits, each featuring three focused 45-minute sessions led by different Council departments.
- Encounters with professionals from HR, finance, engineering, highways, IT, cyber security, recruitment and occupational health.
- Short practical activities showing how teams solve problems and support communities across Cumberland.
- Clear information about qualifications, apprenticeships, graduate routes, professional careers and progression from Level 2 to degree level.

The difference it made

- All eight students reported learning more about Council careers; five said they knew much more than before.
- Seven students said they would consider a wider range of jobs, and six were more likely to think about their future.
- Learners identified teamwork, communication, listening, planning, creativity, problem solving and adaptability.
- Netherhall and Cumberland Council both expressed interest in repeating and expanding the model for larger groups.

"It has taught me a lot about project managing, leadership, teamwork, creativity and listening skills." – *STUDENT FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- A safari model exposed learners to several departments without creating the burden of multiple individual placements.
- The school, employer and Careers Hub agreed learning outcomes before delivery and built in preparation and reflection.
- Sessions linked careers to business, computing, geography, engineering, citizenship, PSHE and GCSE options.
- Employees shared real career journeys, challenged stereotypes and gave learners space to compare roles and working environments.

What the employer gained

- A manageable way to showcase numerous departments, career levels and less visible roles within one organisation.
- Early engagement with local talent before GCSE and post-16 decisions are fixed.
- A scalable contribution to social mobility, local talent retention and public-sector workforce development.
- A flexible format that works around staff workloads because departments contribute short, focused sessions.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Choose a clear learner group and purpose, such as raising ambition, exploring one sector or informing GCSE and post-16 choices.

2 Build a simple experience
Create a half-day safari with a welcome, tour and three or four short sessions delivered by different teams.

3 Make careers visible
Give every team a simple brief: one real task, one employee story, required skills and clear entry and progression routes.

4 Keep the door open
Build in preparation and reflection, then offer a themed return visit, operational-site tour or practical project.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
A workplace safari lets several teams share the load while young people see the breadth of your organisation. Start with one half-day, clear learning outcomes and three short department sessions, then build towards practical tasks or operational-site visits.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub

INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR KENDAL STUDENTS

How local employers created an inclusive group work experience week with The Queen Katherine School

THE OPPORTUNITY

Eleven Year 10 students who had not secured individual placements took part in a supported five-day programme. Local employers combined workplace visits, practical projects, career conversations and reflection to build confidence and prevent students from missing out.

11 Year 10 students took part

5/5 employer satisfaction from Metroplan and Genesis Homes

What the employer delivered

- A full week combining school-based skills activity, workplace visits, practical tasks, post-16 exploration and structured reflection.
- Two visits to Metroplan, where students toured the factory, explored manufacturing roles, designed a whiteboard and returned to build it.
- A live Genesis Homes site visit with induction, PPE, a site tour, employee career stories and a bricklaying workshop.
- A visit to Lancaster & Morecambe College for vocational tasters, construction activities and information about further-education routes.
- Cumbria Youth Alliance teamwork and problem-solving challenges, followed by Skills Builder and Unifrog reflection back at school.

The difference it made

- Students explored manufacturing, construction, engineering, technical education and apprenticeship pathways.
- A learner with 32% prior attendance attended every day of the programme and displayed no behavioural issues.
- Feedback showed development in teamwork, communication, listening, problem solving, resilience and workplace confidence.
- All participating employers pledged to co-design further activity with the school for the autumn term.

"The hands-on project allowed students to demonstrate strong teamwork and a willingness to learn." – *METROPLAN EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- The programme replaced a week in school with genuine employer contact and purposeful workplace activity.
- Employers contributed short, manageable experiences rather than needing to host individual students for a full week.
- Manufacturing and construction tasks linked naturally to maths, science, design and technology, communication and teamwork.
- Local, walkable employers and school-supported transport reduced rural access barriers and made supervision practical.

What the employer gained

- A manageable way to showcase roles, apprenticeships and workplace culture without hosting a full-week individual placement.
- Meaningful contact with young people who may otherwise miss work experience because of confidence, wellbeing or work-readiness barriers.
- Strong local social value, future-talent engagement and positive visibility through regional good-practice coverage.
- A shared-delivery model where several employers contribute one focused activity, reducing the burden on any single organisation.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the cohort, barriers, learning outcomes, staffing, transport and behaviour support with the school and Careers Hub.

2 Build a simple experience
Offer one manageable contribution, such as a two-hour visit, staff talk, site tour, practical task or return project.

3 Make careers visible
Make pathways visible by showing entry-level, apprenticeship, technical, professional and support roles across the organisation.

4 Keep the door open
Coordinate contributions into a themed week and finish with reflection, evaluation and a clear next-step activity.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need to host a student for a whole week. By contributing one purposeful workplace visit or practical task to a shared programme, your organisation can remove barriers, inspire local young people and strengthen its future talent pipeline.

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ONE WORKPLACE, A WORLD OF CAREERS

How Center Parcs, Whinfell Forest created a whole-cohort exploration day for Samuel King's School

THE OPPORTUNITY

The full Year 8 cohort explored a large, multi-department workplace through an employer briefing, village tour and job-shadowing carousel. Student preferences and support needs shaped the experience, helping a rural school provide inclusive access to many careers in one location.

33 Year 8 students took part

***82%** recognised the wide variety of roles available*

What the employer delivered

- An employer-led introduction to Center Parcs, workplace expectations and essential health and safety information.
- A guided village tour showing the scale, facilities and variety of teams operating across the Whinfell Forest site.
- A job-shadowing carousel across Guest Services, Sports Café, Leisure, Aqua Sana, Housekeeping and Laundry.
- Practical participation in tasks, including activities such as table clearing and mocktail making, alongside employee conversations.
- Pre-visit preparation, department choices and post-visit reflection to connect the day with personal strengths and career ideas.

Why it worked

- One large employer provided breadth without requiring several separate workplace visits, which suited the school's rural location.
- The school, employer and Careers Hub co-designed the itinerary with clear learning outcomes and departmental guidance.
- Students ranked preferred departments and were allocated using interests, individual needs, staffing and practical logistics.
- Transport, free-school-meal lunches, pre-visit preparation and supported groups removed participation barriers.

The difference it made

- 76% reported increased careers knowledge and 82% recognised the breadth of roles available within the organisation.
- 58% reported increased interest in the sector and 48% would now consider a related career.
- Students strengthened communication, teamwork and problem-solving through real-world observation and participation.
- Center Parcs agreed the model could continue with future cohorts, closing a gap in the school's annual Key Stage 3 programme.

"Due to it being a one-day event, we managed to involve departments that wouldn't be able to commit to a whole week."

– *CENTER PARCS EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

What the employer gained

- A practical way to showcase many roles, career pathways and working environments across one multi-functional organisation.
- Early contact with young people from a rural area the employer would not normally reach, supporting future local recruitment.
- A repeatable activity that includes a whole cohort and demonstrates measurable student outcomes.
- Staff development through involving teams that had not previously worked with younger work-experience groups.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the cohort, learning outcomes, student interests, support needs, transport, lunches and staffing with the school.

2 Build a simple experience
Build a simple day: welcome and safety briefing, workplace tour, lunch, then small-group departmental shadowing.

3 Make careers visible
Let students rank departments, then give each team a short brief covering tasks, behaviours, skills and progression routes.

4 Keep the door open
Collect student and staff feedback, refine the rotations and repeat annually or expand to other age groups.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
If your organisation has several teams or departments, one structured day can reveal far more careers than a traditional placement. Co-design the visit with the school, involve staff across the business and let learner interests shape the experience.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub

Introduce & Inspire

SMALL WORKPLACE TASKS THAT BUILD BIG CONFIDENCE

How Booths and Bendrigg Trust created accessible workplace visits for Sandgate School

THE OPPORTUNITY

Thirteen Key Stage 3 learners with Special Educational Needs (SEND) took part in structured visits to Booths Kendal and Bendrigg Trust. Short, genuine tasks, visual instructions and prepared employee conversations helped learners develop confidence, independence and awareness of local jobs.

13 KS3 learners took part

***100%** of the Bendrigg group wanted future work experience and a job*

What the employer delivered

- Pre-visit research, prepared questions and clear information about the workplace, employees and activities.
- At Booths, small groups rotated through café tasks, shelf stocking, entrance displays and supported till work.
- At Bendrigg, learners prepared facilities for visitors by cleaning, making beds, restocking and arranging shared spaces.
- Short, visual task instructions and support for different communication methods, including questions added to an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device.
- A closing Q&A with employees in different roles, plus certificates and discussion of volunteering as a route towards paid work.

Why it worked

- Learners completed real tasks that mattered to the workplace, rather than only touring or observing.
- Employers received a clear briefing on the group, intended outcomes and how to make the visit meaningful and accessible.
- School preparation connected research, speaking and listening, communication, independence and reflection to the visit.
- Pairs and small groups, 15 to 20-minute activities and familiar school staff made transitions and participation manageable.

The difference it made

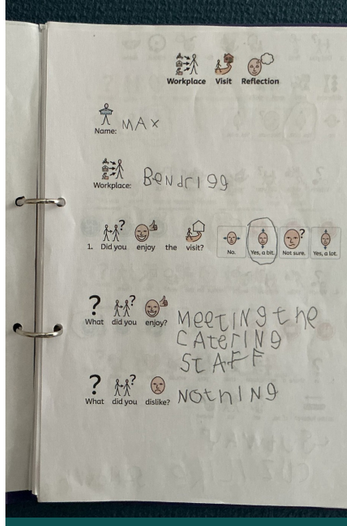
- Learners discovered customer service, retail, catering, housekeeping, volunteering and outdoor-sector roles in the local area.
- Teachers reported that learner engagement, communication and independence exceeded expectations during the visits.
- Learners practised asking questions, following instructions, completing tasks, working with unfamiliar adults and reflecting on strengths.
- Both employers welcomed future groups, supporting Sandgate's rolling three-year programme of two or three visits per class each year.

"You are most welcome. What a fab bunch of youngsters."

– *BENDRIGG TRUST EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

What the employer gained

- A practical way to showcase entry-level, part-time and volunteering opportunities that learners could realistically access locally.
- Early contact with SEND learners who may become future employees, volunteers or customers.
- Positive staff and customer engagement, stronger community links and clear evidence of inclusive social value.
- A repeatable 90-minute format that can be delivered by several employees without committing to a full placement.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Meet the school first. Agree learner needs, communication approaches, supervision, transport, timings and intended outcomes.

2 Build a simple experience
Choose three or four genuine tasks that can be completed safely in pairs or small groups in 15 to 20 minutes.

3 Make careers visible
Brief employees, provide visual instructions where useful and finish with questions about roles, shifts, volunteering and progression.

4 Keep the door open
Invite another group, offer a deeper post-16 visit or explore volunteering and supported work-experience progression.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
A meaningful visit can last just 90 minutes. With clear preparation, genuine tasks and supportive staff, your workplace can help SEND learners build independence, picture themselves in work and discover realistic local opportunities.

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Introduce & Inspire Investigate & Explore



BRINGING ENTERPRISE LEARNING INTO THE WORKPLACE

How Futamura helped Year 9 students from Solway Community School explore careers through a real business challenge

THE OPPORTUNITY

Around 30 Year 9 students, with a focus on disadvantaged learners, visited Futamura in Wigton. A workplace tour, employee encounters, laboratory demonstrations and a live commercial challenge connected the Cumbria Award Enterprise Module with advanced manufacturing careers.

100% increased careers knowledge

93% recognised the wide range of roles at Futamura

What the employer delivered

- A welcome and health and safety briefing, followed by a guided tour of the manufacturing site.
- Conversations with employees from manufacturing, engineering, science, HR, marketing, IT and business functions.
- A visit to the laboratories, including scientific demonstrations, showing how sustainable packaging products are made.
- A business challenge asking small groups to discuss what they would do as a team to encourage new business opportunities in the UK and abroad.
- Focusing on skills in business, communication, teamwork, problem solving and adaptability to future pathways.

The difference it made

- 100% reported increased knowledge of careers in manufacturing and engineering.
- 93% recognised that Futamura offered many different roles within one organisation.
- Learners identified teamwork, communication, listening, problem solving, creativity, adaptability, planning and leadership skills.
- Futamura confirmed a willingness to host again, creating a repeatable model that Solway can extend to other sectors.

"Great for school students to experience a place of work and listen to a variety of different people talking about how businesses operate and the opportunities available to them."
– *FUTAMURA EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- The challenge reflected an issue the employer's own business team was considering, giving students a genuine commercial problem.
- The visit was linked directly to the Cumbria Award Enterprise Module, so workplace learning built on classroom activity.
- Students met people from various departments, challenging the idea that manufacturing only means factory-floor roles.
- Co-design with the organisation to ensure the aims and objectives were discussed prior to the visit and met on the day.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to showcase engineering, science, research, sustainability and business roles within advanced manufacturing.
- Early contact with local young people before work-experience and post-16 choices are fixed.
- A measurable contribution to social mobility, aspiration raising and equitable access for rural and disadvantaged learners.
- A repeatable format that engages employees across departments and builds awareness of apprenticeships and future recruitment routes.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the cohort, curriculum link and learning outcomes. Prioritise learners who face barriers to employer access where appropriate.

2 Build a simple experience
Build a focused visit with a safety briefing, tour, employee encounters, practical demonstration and time for reflection.

3 Make careers visible
Set a genuine business challenge and explain the departments, skills, qualifications and apprenticeship routes involved.

4 Keep the door open
Repeat the visit, add an apprentice panel or project, and connect it to later work experience and post-16 decision-making.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
A workplace tour becomes far more powerful when learners solve a real business problem. Link one visit to curriculum learning, involve several departments and show clear routes into your organisation to inspire local future talent.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub

MAKING A LIVE CONSTRUCTION SITE ACCESSIBLE

How Oakmere Homes helped learners from South Cumbria Pupil Referral Unit explore achievable local careers

THE OPPORTUNITY

Four Key Stage 3 learners visited Oakmere Homes for a supported tour of a live housing development. Learners met with senior staff, apprentices and site teams, who introduced the house-building process, sustainable technology and discussed their varied roles, giving vulnerable learners an authentic and achievable view of available local careers.

4 KS3 learners attended

6+ career areas explored across construction and housebuilding

What the employer delivered

- A supported visit to a live housing development, adapted for learners with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, disrupted education and low confidence.
- A site tour explaining the stages of house building, project timescales, environmental considerations and supply-chain activity.
- Conversations with an executive administrator, site manager, apprentices and other staff about their roles and career journeys.
- Exposure to various roles, including groundwork, plumbing, plant operation, site management, sales, marketing and sustainable heat-pump systems.
- A linked Furness College visit introducing construction courses and practical progression routes, including wall-building activities.

The difference it made

- Learners identified an interest in careers in sales, groundwork, plumbing and other physical site-based roles.
- The experience increased confidence in students discussing future careers and helped learners connect interests with progression routes.
- Learners gained insight into workplace expectations, professional communication, personal responsibility and site safety.
- Oakmere Homes confirmed willingness to support similar future activity, creating a model that can be repeated.

"The groundworker role is something I could do, and it feels achievable." – *LEARNER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- The live site made the sector tangible and helped learners identify roles that felt realistic and achievable.
- Oakmere staff adapted conversations to individual interests and used their own career journeys to prompt questions.
- The experience supported later learning in curriculum subjects such as, science, humanities, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE), careers and media.
- A small, supported group allowed flexibility and meaningful and relatable conversations with staff.

What the employer gained

- A manageable way to showcase skills-shortage roles and the breadth of careers behind modern housebuilding.
- Early contact with local young people who may lack family networks or access to traditional placements.
- Meaningful social value through inclusion of disadvantaged learners at increased risk of becoming NEET.
- A low-burden alternative to a long placement, suitable for an SME with fewer than 50 employees.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Plan early with the school. Share attendance, SEMH, communication, safety and support needs, plus learner interests.

2 Build a simple experience
Offer a structured site visit with induction, a tour, employee stories, role exploration and at least one practical task.

3 Make careers visible
Show trades alongside site management, sales, marketing, administration, sustainability and supply-chain careers.

4 Keep the door open
Link the visit to a practical college session, curriculum work, apprentice encounter or supported return experience.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
Even a small construction business can make a major difference. A supported site visit, clear employee stories and one practical follow-up can help vulnerable learners see local careers as realistic while building your future talent pipeline.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub



SHORT EMPLOYER SESSIONS, LASTING LEADERSHIP IMPACT

Developing future leaders: how Cumberland Council helped St Joseph's students apply leadership skills in a real-world setting

THE OPPORTUNITY

Thirteen Key Stage 3 student leaders worked with teams across Cumberland Council over several short sessions. Students researched local government careers, explored different services and created a careers awareness campaign, developing leadership and essential skills through a real project.

100% increased careers awareness

67% developed leadership skills and would explore a wider range of jobs

What the employer delivered

- A series of short workplace sessions at Allerdale House, scheduled across different days to reduce disruption to learning.
- Encounters with Communications, HR, Adult Social Care, Trading Standards, Environmental Services, Engineering and other teams.
- In preparation, students conducted careers research and completed a Future Skills Questionnaire to identify strengths, interests and development priorities.
- A real project brief: design a careers awareness campaign showing the breadth of roles available within Cumberland Council.
- A final presentation to council colleagues and fellow students, with opportunities to demonstrate leadership and receive feedback.

The difference it made

- All survey respondents reported increased awareness of careers and the wide range of roles within Cumberland Council.
- All respondents said the experience made them think more about their future and challenged assumptions about local government work.
- Two-thirds reported developing leadership skills and becoming more likely to seek further experience or consider a wider range of jobs.
- Cumberland Council confirmed willingness to host again and suggested deeper programmes linked to Highways, Care and Environmental Services.

"The shorter sessions made it more manageable for staff to be able to support."

– *CUMBERLAND COUNCIL EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- A real campaign and professional audience required students to apply leadership, communication, creativity and problem solving skills.
- Short sessions enabled several departments to take part without placing significant pressure on any one team.
- The programme connected careers with curriculum learning such as, presentation skills in english, linking mathematics to the of work of an Arborist and wider personal development.
- Preparation, ongoing reflection and school support helped disadvantaged and Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) learners access the full programme.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to reveal less visible roles and challenge assumptions about careers within a large organisation.
- Early engagement with local future talent, including learners affected by disadvantage, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and geographic barriers.
- A measurable contribution to aspiration raising, social mobility, leadership development and community engagement.
- A sustainable format where several departments each contribute one short session to a shared project.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the learner group, project outcome, skills to develop and any access needs. Use a simple baseline such as the Future Skills Questionnaire.

2 Build a simple experience
Invite several departments to deliver short sessions focused on one real task, employee story and set of career routes.

3 Make careers visible
Set a genuine project, such as a campaign, service improvement idea or community brief, that requires teamwork and leadership.

4 Keep the door open
Finish with a presentation to an authentic audience, give structured feedback and agree a deeper follow-up with one service area.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
You do not need to host a traditional placement. Several short sessions, linked by one real project, can involve more employees, reveal the breadth of your organisation and give young people meaningful leadership and workplace experience.

START A CONVERSATION
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FROM CLASSROOM PLANNING TO REAL CHILDCARE PRACTICE

How Cheeky Monkeys Childcare gave Walney High School students an active role in a nursery workplace

THE OPPORTUNITY

Health and Social Care Students attending an Early Years Setting, planned age-appropriate activities and delivered them with children at Cheeky Monkeys Nursery. The half-day visit turned curriculum learning into an authentic experience of the workplace.

7 Year 8 students took part

100% knew more about childcare careers after the visit

What the employer delivered

- A welcome, question-and-answer session and guided tour explaining how the nursery operates and the responsibilities of its staff.
- A pre-visit task in which students researched the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS), planning activities for babies and toddlers.
- Delivery of student-planned activities with children, requiring communication, teamwork, flexibility and age-appropriate practice.
- Observation of roles across the setting.
- Participation in nursery routines, including lunchtime support, followed by reflection on skills, roles and progression routes.

The difference it made

- Every student reported an increase in knowledge about childcare careers and identified a broader range of roles within a nursery.
- Students became more aware of wider career opportunities and interested in gaining further experience in the workplace.
- Learners developed a range of Essential Skills.
- Cheeky Monkeys offered work experience, and students returned to volunteer in their own time.
- Cheeky Monkeys expressed a willingness to make the project an annual activity.

"This will help with recruitment in the following years. It gives students a clearer vision of nursery work and a passion that cannot be taught in a classroom." – *CHEEKY MONKEYS CHILDCARE EMPLOYER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- Students arrived with a purpose and completed authentic tasks rather than simply touring or observing the workplace.
- The nursery and school agreed aims, learner needs and activities through detailed pre-planning.
- The model connected Health and Social Care learning with EYFS, safeguarding, activity planning, risk awareness and communication.
- The half-day format worked well for children, staff and students while still providing meaningful participation and reflection.

What the employer gained

- A practical way to showcase different roles within their organisation, such as management, practitioner, SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), catering for example.
- Early contact with potential future apprentices and employees in a sector facing recruitment and workforce challenges.
- A repeatable half-day model that offers deeper learning than passive observation and can be shared with other childcare settings.



CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group
Agree the cohort, curriculum outcomes, safeguarding arrangements, staffing needs and the age groups learners will work with.

2 Build a simple experience
Ask learners to research EYFS and prepare a simple age-appropriate activity before entering the workplace.

3 Make careers visible
Build a half-day around a welcome, tour, employee conversations, activity delivery, a nursery routine and reflection.

4 Keep the door open
Offer follow-up work experience, volunteering, an apprenticeship talk or an annual visit with the next student cohort.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?
A well-planned half-day can give students more depth than a week of observation. Co-design one practical task with the school, let learners prepare in advance and involve staff from across your setting to inspire future early years talent.

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→ Cumbria Careers Hub



TURNING A CAREERS EVENT INTO A **MEANINGFUL WORK EXPERIENCE**

How land, nature and heritage organisations inspired students from Whitehaven Academy through practical activities at a green careers event

THE OPPORTUNITY

Twenty-one Key Stage 3 students from Whitehaven Academy's Outdoor Learning Programme attended the Green Careers and Skills Day in Grasmere. More than 34 organisations replaced traditional careers displays with hands-on activities linked to skills, progression routes and careers across the green economy.

***21** Whitehaven students took part*

***34** organisations showcased the green economy*

***243** Students attended the event*

What the employer delivered

- A large sector event redesigned to ensure that the students had a meaningful experience.
- Hands-on activities including dry-stone walling, hedge laying, hurdle making, lime plastering, conservation and heritage skills.
- Direct encounters with professionals from conservation, environmental management, utilities, heritage, and land-based organisations.
- Clear information about qualifications, volunteering, apprenticeships, training pathways, and local employment opportunities.
- Exhibitor training from Cumbria Careers Hub so every activity included interaction, workplace insight and intended learner outcomes.

The difference it made

- Learners moved from narrow views of outdoor manual work to recognising scientific, technical, practical and office-based green careers.
- Post-event feedback showed greater understanding about future pathways.
- Learners identified development in their teamwork, listening, communication, leadership, creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving skills.
- Whitehaven Academy want to participate again in the future. The National Park Authority will use the learning to develop a new work-experience model.

"Often with careers events students just get talked at and they are uninspiring. This definitely wasn't."

– *WHITEHAVEN ACADEMY TEACHER FEEDBACK*

Why it worked

- Employers created tasks for students to get involved
- Lake District National Park Authority, LANSS, the Careers hub, worked in collaboration, to develop the format to be more meaningful to students attending the event.
- Activities linked geography, environmental science, sustainability and outdoor learning with real local careers.
- Whitehaven selected Outdoor Learning students, with a focus on those students who are disadvantaged.

What the employer gained

- A practical way for a whole sector to showcase diverse roles, volunteering and progression routes to large numbers of learners.
- Early contact with local future talent and greater visibility for careers that young people may not otherwise encounter.
- A shared contribution to social mobility by prioritising disadvantaged learners and overcoming rural access barriers.
- A scalable model that enables SMEs and voluntary organisations to contribute without hosting a traditional week-long placement.

CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

1 Choose the group

Choose a clear theme, learner group and outcomes. Use school data and tools such as the Future Skills Questionnaire to target participation.

2 Build a simple experience

Brief every organisation to offer one short, hands-on activity linked to a real task, required skills and workplace context.

3 Make careers visible

Create a broad sector mix and require exhibitors to explain qualifications, apprenticeships, essential skills, volunteering and progression routes.

4 Keep the door open

Capture pre and post event feedback, then offer volunteering, mentoring, workplace visits or collaborative placements with several organisations.

Could your workplace inspire a young person?

If several organisations share delivery, a sector event can become meaningful work experience. Replace stands with real tasks, agree learning outcomes and show clear next steps to inspire young people while reducing the burden on each employer.

START A CONVERSATION
→ Cumbria Careers Hub



THANK YOU

Cumbria Careers Hub would like to thank all the employers across Cumbria who supported the Modern Work Experience pilots and have agreed to continue working with us to create more workplace experiences for young people in the future.

We would also like to thank the schools that worked with us to test different approaches. Your willingness to try something new, share your learning and work closely with employers has made these case studies possible. We hope the examples will give other employers and schools practical ideas to help shape the future of work experience.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all the young people who took part. You approached the experiences with enthusiasm, determination and a real willingness to learn. You were brilliant ambassadors for your schools and communities, and Cumbria is incredibly fortunate to have you as part of its future workforce.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, shared your experience and helped us learn what is possible when employers, schools and young people work together.







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