



# Reimagining Work Experience through collaboration

Opening Doors to Opportunities

KPMG. Make the Difference.



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I firmly believe that your background should never dictate where your talent can take you, and that's why social mobility remains a key priority at KPMG.

It's encouraging to see more organisations join us on the journey to make equity a reality. By working together, we can close the opportunities gap and ensure fairer futures for all.

### Jonathan Holt

Chief Executive KPMG UK and Switzerland, Senior Partner, KPMG UK



# Foreword KPMG

### Catherine Burnet

Head of Audit UK, KPMG UK  
KPMG Sponsor of Opening  
Doors to Opportunities



**We believe talent is everywhere, but unfortunately, opportunity is not. That's why we were proud to lead a pilot collaboration together with the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), Talent Foundry and five like-minded businesses to open doors for students from schools in underserved areas and give them meaningful exposure to the world of work.**

Through our Opening Doors to Opportunities programme, KPMG UK has committed to build the skills of 1m young people by 2030. We see innovation and collaboration as core to this aim. Alone we have welcomed over 5000 young people into our offices this year, but through working in collaboration with others we can achieve greater impact for students - supporting them to compare and contrast differing career paths and working environments - while reducing the burden on schools to source workplace experience opportunities.

This report captures the impact of an innovative pilot, aimed at re-imagining work experience in line with new

statutory guidance that asks schools to offer multiple workplace experiences before the age of 16.

Through a powerful series of multi-sector, work experience half-days, delivered to year 9 students from schools across London we've helped students gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of career paths available to them - and the skills and behaviours that will help them succeed beyond school.

These early insights are critical. For many of the students who took part, this was their first time in a business environment. By showing them what's possible, we hope to inspire long-term confidence, ambition and belief in their potential.

The success of this initiative is a testament to the value of partnership. We thank all the organisations and individuals who generously gave their time, energy and expertise. Together, we've made a real difference - and we hope that by sharing our findings, we can encourage others to consider how they too can work collaboratively to help bridge the opportunity gap.



# Foreword

# Careers & Enterprise Company



The world of work is evolving rapidly, and so too must the way we introduce young people to it. Traditional models of work experience have offered value, but they haven't always reached the students who need them most. This pilot set out to change that - and it has.

By embracing the core principles of modern work experience; accessibility, flexibility, and relevance, leading employers like KPMG, Mace and others introduced multiple employers and a range of experiences to students who had most to gain from being exposed to the world of work.

The model recognises that meaningful impact doesn't always require a week-long placement. In just half a day, students gained insights across multiple sectors, developed essential skills, and, most importantly, saw what's possible for their future.

What stands out is the power of collaboration between employers and education partners - KPMG, The Talent Foundry, Mace, United Airlines, HSBC, Salesforce and Canary Wharf Group.

Together, we've shown that delivering high-quality, scalable experiences is not only possible, but practical – even for organisations without longstanding work experience programmes.

This is more than a pilot - it's a glimpse of the future. A future where careers education reflects the modern economy, where every young person - regardless of background - can access real experiences that unlock aspiration and potential.

To employers who are keen to collaborate and provide flexible, accessible experiences to those who need it most, take the lessons learnt from KPMG and get started. There is plenty of support available from CEC, our Careers Hub network and specialised providers like Talent Foundry.

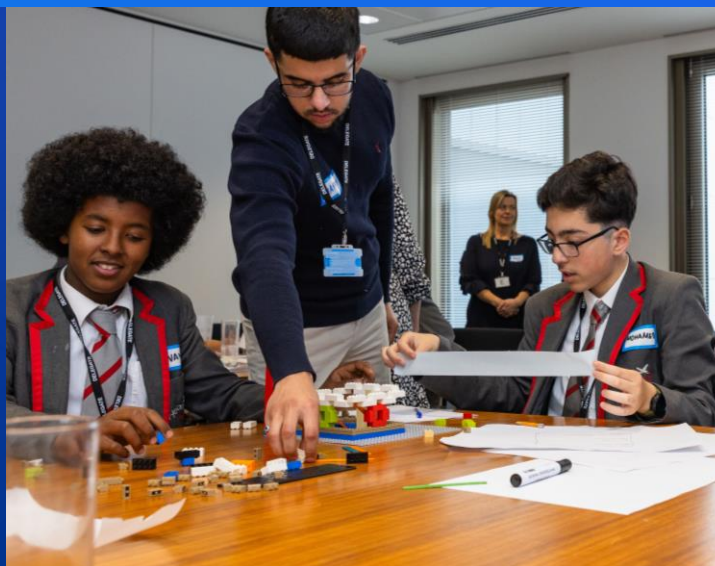


**John Yarham**

CEO, Careers & Enterprise Company



# Our mission



 **86%**

**Young people who have four or more encounters with employers during school are 86% less likely to become NEET.\***

\* Education & Employers

Young people from underserved areas have far less access to employer work experience than their advantaged peers - negatively impacting their career readiness and confidence.

The traditional model of providing a week or two of work experience can be challenging for employers to provide and can miss the opportunity to inspire young people with a wide range of career insights.

Through the pilot we were seeking to demonstrate a new model of work experience – starting earlier, spread across their school career and focused on building skills – in line with new statutory guidance that asks schools to offer multiple, meaningful workplace experiences before age 16 in line with the updated Gatsby Benchmarks.

## Programme aims



**01**

To drive greater impact for students through collaboration.



**02**

Work with students from areas of low social mobility with less access to workplace experiences



**03**

Boost students' confidence and understanding of the skills employers' value through using the Skills Builder Framework.



**04**

Create a comprehensive, multi-sector program to help schools adapt to the updated statutory guidance.



**05**

Encourage fresh approaches to work experience aligned to CEC's equalex framework.



**06**

Deliver five collaborative half-day events, and a celebratory event bringing together all participants - employers, students and staff.



# Programme overview



**A typical, half-day workplace experience, included visiting two work-places in one day between 10am-2.30pm.**

The half days comprised of opportunities to build essential skills and understanding of the workplace environment through:

THE CAREERS &  
ENTERPRISE  
COMPANY

  
The Talent Foundry

 Skills Builder  
PARTNERSHIP  
UK



## 01

A task or challenge in groups relating to the work of the employer and focused on developing essential work skills underpinned by the Skills Builder Framework.



## 02

The opportunity to meet and speak to a range of employee volunteers and receive feedback on their work



## 03

An office or site tour.

The pilot was developed by KPMG and the Careers & Enterprise Company and supported by The Talent Foundry and five major employers - Mace, HSBC, Canary Wharf Group (CWG), United Airlines and Salesforce.

The model brought together multiple employers to design and deliver a structured experience that gave young people an authentic insight into the world of work.

Modern work experience across multiple sectors will help young people make informed choices and improve career readiness and employability by offering multiple, variable and targeted experiences throughout their education journey



# 92

took part in work  
experience half days  
across London.

# Students

**The experience was designed to boost confidence, broaden understanding of career pathways and develop essential skills.**

# Impact & feedback Schools



The programme was fantastic and led really well by The Talent Foundry. Engagement was fantastic and volunteers worked really well with students. I loved how welcoming everyone was to our students and they now understand different roles in KPMG and Canary Wharf Group.'

**Educator,**

Mulberry Academy Shoreditch

I have a better idea of how I plan my future whilst knowing it might not go as planned."

**Student,**  
MACE x KPMG

People were kind, made you feel welcome, and it made me feel like I could work somewhere like this."

**Student,**  
HSBC x KPMG

It was really interesting to learn about a work area I would not think about."

**Student,**  
CWG x KPMG

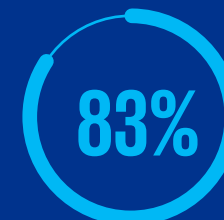
Many different career opportunities, I got to experience what many people/staff do, the skills required for these jobs and much more."

**Student,**  
United Airlines x KPMG

It helped me learn a lot about technology which will benefit my skill for my future career."

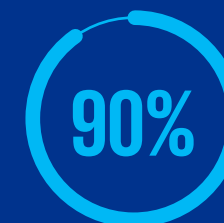
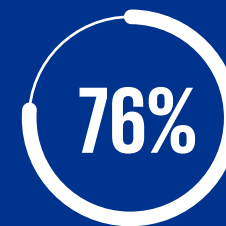
**Student,**  
Salesforce x KPMG

**Student outcomes:**  
The difference we made



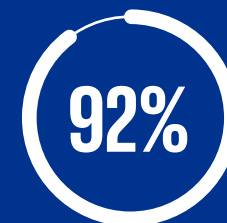
Agreed they were more aware of their skills and talents

Feel more confident they could work somewhere like KPMG

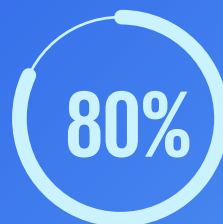


Agreed being able to talk to volunteers at the workshop was a real benefit to them

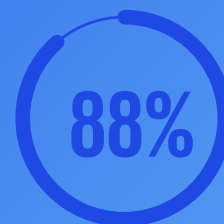
Agree they understand the type of skills employers are looking for



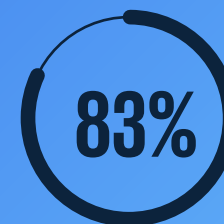
# Celebrating SUCCESS



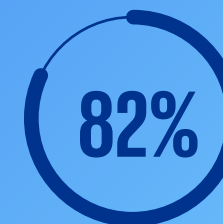
Understand how they can apply their learnings and experience at school/in their studies



Valued the chance to learn about different sectors/ organisations



Understand more about what it's like to work in a professional setting



Have a greater understanding of how to access different pathways into employment e.g. University/Apprenticeships



The first step was intimidating because of the sheer number of people involved. I couldn't get involved in any activities because no one could hear what I was saying.

Until I asked Joe Seddon that question about apprenticeships, despite being in a big crowd. I think this gave me the confidence I needed.

Thank you so much to all the volunteers who get involved (I really admire you all)!"

**Student,**  
Featherstone High School

## The wrap-up event was a dynamic, inspiring programme culmination in KPMG's Canary Wharf office.

It allowed students to reflect on their shared journey, reinforce key learnings and continue building essential workplace skills like networking through human bingo and negotiating as part of a survival themed activity.

Students heard from inspiring speakers including Cath Burnet, Head of Audit at KPMG, Joe Seddon, CEO of Zero Gravity and the BBC Education team, who delivered a session which challenged common media misconceptions.

## Students shared positive reflections on the programme in three main categories:

# 01

Developing key transferable skills

# 02

Gaining valuable career insight and work preparation by hearing directly from professionals across a range of industries

# 03

Engaging directly with volunteers and practising networking skills in a safe environment.



# Feedback from Employers

We were thrilled to work with KPMG and the Careers & Enterprise Company on this great initiative. Bringing together experts from different industry sectors gives students a deeper insight into a range of careers available and the attributes required across all sectors to thrive.

At CWG, we are committed to creating positive and lasting social impact through our focus on education, employment and skills. Initiatives like this directly support our social value strategy, helping young people develop the knowledge and confidence they need to succeed, while building stronger, more inclusive communities for the future.

**Serina Shonibare,**  
Social Value Manager, CWG

Students gained valuable insights into the wide spectrum of careers available in the industry but also developed essential business skills including communication, teamwork, and leadership, helping to build their confidence and aspirations for the future.

United Airlines is proud to support this important initiative and looks forward to continued collaboration on future events that help shape and inspire the next generation of talent.

**Linda Harding,**  
Sales Manager, United Airlines

We were delighted to welcome students to HSBC as part of the Opening Doors to Opportunities programme in collaboration with KPMG.

Through this programme, we had a real focus on helping develop the technology skills, awareness, and confidence of the young people who attended as part of our wider programme to build a truly inclusive business.

**Stuart Riley**  
Group Chief Information Officer, HSBC

It was a real privilege to welcome students in our London office as part of the work experience programme led by KPMG and Careers & Enterprise Company. The energy and curiosity they brought to exploring the role of AI in shaping the future was truly inspiring.

This experience is a powerful example of what's possible when businesses come together to open up access and build future-ready skills. Exposure like this helps ensure the next generation doesn't just adapt to the future of work, they feel empowered to shape their own career journeys.

**Uzma Ahmed Munir**  
Philanthropy & Engagement, Salesforce

Partnering with KPMG and The Talent Foundry to deliver this work experience pilot was more than just a collaboration — it was a shared commitment to shaping futures. Being in a room with almost 100 Year 9 students, each one full of curiosity and potential, was genuinely inspiring. You could feel the shift happening, students discovering careers they'd never considered, and realising that their future could be bigger than they imagined.

At Mace, we talk about redefining the boundaries of ambition and this was a perfect example of that in action. By opening doors, sharing insights, and working alongside incredible partners, we helped unlock possibilities that could change lives. That's the kind of impact that stays with you and why we do what we do!

**Alina Cornish**  
Social Value Manager, Mace





# Learnings

Delivering a multi-company work experience programme for young people is as rewarding as it is complex. Through this initiative, we gained valuable insights into what makes a collaborative, impactful experience work, both for students and for the organisations involved.



## Short term considerations

### Relatable role models create impact



One of the most powerful takeaways for students was the diversity of career journeys shared by employees. It became clear that job title or seniority is not what matters most - authenticity, relatability, and a willingness to share personal stories of challenge as well as success, are what leave a lasting impression.

### A shared skills framework supported students understanding



At each event, we used the Skills Builder Framework to ensure the students clearly recognised the essential skills they were developing throughout their experience. As part of the celebration event, they reflected on their progress and identified the skills they wish to further develop in the future.

### Student engagement thrives on interaction



The sessions that generated the most enthusiasm were hands-on, discussion-based, and participatory. Students responded best when given the chance to ask questions, experience real workplace scenarios, problem-solve and present their ideas.

## Short term considerations

### Open and honest conversations create stronger collaborations



From the outset, transparency was essential. Open dialogue and a willingness to share allowed each organisation to bring their strengths to the table, identify potential opportunities and challenges early, and align around a shared purpose.

### Simplicity leads to impact



We learned that a streamlined, focused approach was most effective. We prioritised quality over quantity - curating experiences with clear learning outcomes that were targeted, relevant, and manageable for students. Simply speaking with colleagues and exploring the work environment was a huge part of the experience.

## Longer term considerations

### Greater collaboration, targeting and a shared terminology for skills



Longer term, organisations with more established work experience programmes can deliver even greater impact for students by working in collaboration with clients, customers and suppliers to deliver multi-sector experiences. The existing national infrastructure, [Careers Hubs](#) and [work experience providers](#) can help target opportunities at the young people who are currently missing out. Additionally, universal agreement on a common language for skills, such as the [Skills Builder framework](#), would make it easier for students, school and employers to evidence the essential workplace skills young people gain through work experience and extra-curricular activity.

“

Supporting the collaboration pilot with a series of facilitated workshops has shown that there is a real appetite from schools and employers to try something different. Working collaboratively has helped young people experience a wider range of industries and discover more alternative career routes.

This pilot has shown young people that there's a place for them and their skills in the modern workplace. Across the board we've gained a better understanding of how to help teachers and business to bring employer encounters into education in a new and meaningful way.”

**Jenni Anderson,**  
Chief Executive, The Talent Foundry



# Get Started

**For any organisation looking to make a difference, your local [Careers Hub](#) is a valuable first port of call. They can connect you to schools, advise on best practice, and support you to access resources to design experiences that meet the needs of young people in your area.**

To ensure all experiences are as meaningful as possible and meet educators' expectations, the national body for Careers Education's [outcomes framework - equalex](#) can support you to map your experiences and learning outcomes.



If you are interested in learning more about Opening Doors to Opportunities and the programmes that KPMG in the UK support, take a look at our [community strategy](#) and how you can get involved

For all other queries relating to Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability at KPMG in the UK please email:

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