



Building Your Talent Pipeline

A guide to employer
engagement in
education

Introduction

I run a company that designs and delivers technical education programmes and I am a Trustee of the Edge Foundation. That gives me a unique perspective. What I see worries me.

Employers across all sectors are facing skills shortages. The temptation is to try and fill skills gaps quickly by attracting talent from neighbouring businesses or sectors. That seems to solve the short term problem, but it creates a merry-go-round of challenges and escalating costs across the labour market.

Instead, we need to find a way to work together to solve the bigger challenge of encouraging new people into the sector. The way to do that is for employers of all sizes to engage with education to build a pipeline of skilled young people who are ready to fill these gaps. Rather

than re-inventing the wheel by creating a separate local or sectoral scheme, employers should get on board with the ten key ways to engage set out in this guide.

Over the next five years, I want engagement in education to become the next sustainability for employers – working together towards a long-term shared goal that drives collaboration and provides a very valuable economic and social return.

Andrew Stevens

President & CEO - CNet Training and
Trustee of the Edge Foundation



Why is building your talent pipeline important?

The UK economy, including many individual employers, are suffering from chronic skills shortages in their workforce. Now more than ever, **the implications of Brexit, Covid-19 and the fourth industrial revolution are exacerbating the scale of these.** Feeding into the education system and nurturing young people is one crucial way to ensure these problems do not persist in the future.

Disruption caused by the pandemic has seen the number of available job candidates grow, yet **employers still struggle to find workers with the skills they need.** The [Open University's Business Barometer](#) highlights that three in five employers are still unable to attract the skills they require. As a result, there has been an increase in the amount spent by businesses to find, secure, and develop talent, with employers spending out on recruitment fees, increased salaries, temporary staff, and training to upskill those hired at a lower level to a **total tune of £6.1 billion per year.**

The UK skills mismatch has been highlighted by the [Industrial Strategy Council](#) who report that **by 2030, 7 million additional workers could be under-skilled for their job requirements** - this would currently constitute about 20% of the labour market.

The future workforce needs to be equipped with the skills, competencies and insight into the world of work to be ready to contribute as successful employees. A stark message from employers is that they are overwhelmingly looking for transferable skills from their recruits, such as communication, critical thinking, creativity and resilience. Research by [CBI/Pearson](#) found that **over half of employers (60%) value broader skills such as problem solving.** The Department for Education's own [Employer Perspectives Survey](#) shows that **almost two thirds (65%) of employers rated relevant work experience as significant or critical when hiring,** compared to less than half (46%) for academic qualifications.

Securing the future pipeline of talent requires businesses to act now in order to give individuals the insight into potential jobs and career opportunities. It also requires concerted executive buy-in, leading from the top to prioritise this important area.

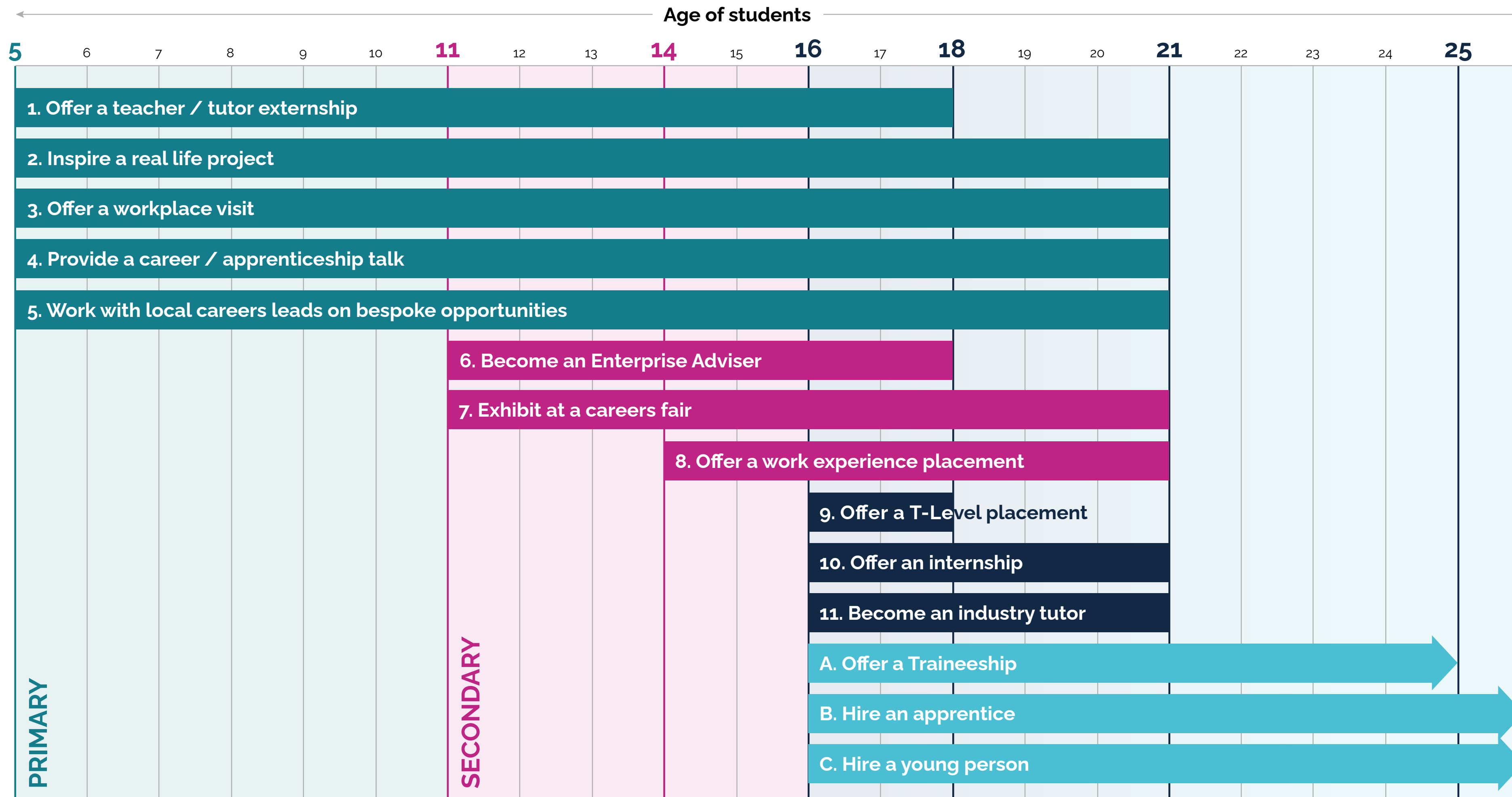
Read more about skills shortages and the changing labour market in [Edge's series of bulletins](#) and turn to the next page to see how you can help address them.



...by 2030, 7 million additional workers could be under-skilled for their job requirements...

Industrial Strategy Council

How to build your talent pipeline - key opportunities for engagement in education



Pupils and students with additional needs

Diversity brings great benefits to an organisation. Pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) need just the same information and guidance about employment opportunities. Some activities may need to be slightly adapted for different needs and abilities – a SEND school or the SEND co-ordinator at a mainstream school or college can support any changes that might need to be made to make the experience enjoyable for everyone involved.

You can find out more about each of these opportunities on the following pages.

More information about employer engagement opportunities

From 5 years old

1. Offer a teacher / tutor externship

An externship is a chance for a teacher or tutor to visit for 1-2 days, observe how their subject is applicable in the workplace, then use that experience to inspire their students. By hosting an externship, you can support teachers and tutors to introduce a generation of students to your industry and organisation.

<https://www.edge.co.uk/edge-future-learning/efl-training/an-introduction-to-teacher-externships-and-real-world-learning/>

2. Inspire a real life project

Schools, colleges and universities are increasingly open to working with employers to add real life context. You could set students a project brief, offer support during the project and then feed back on their work at the end. You may be surprised by the new ideas they come up with.

<https://www.edge.co.uk/edge-future-learning/project-based-learning/>

3. Offer a workplace visit

You can broaden the workplace knowledge of young people and inspire them about different job sectors and roles by offering a workplace visit for a group of students, giving them an insight into your company, the different roles and the sector you work in. Feedback suggests these immersive visits can really impact on young people's aspirations - you have to see it to be it!

Contact your local college, training provider or university

4. Provide a career / apprenticeship talk

How did you get inspired to pursue your role? You could be that source of inspiration for young people by giving a careers or apprenticeships talk, opening their eyes to jobs and sectors they may not have known existed and showing the relevance of their education to real life.

<https://www.educationandemployers.org/volunteers/>

5. Work with local careers leads on bespoke opportunities

As with any service, it can be more enjoyable and effective to go bespoke rather than off-the-shelf. Why not get in touch with your local education institution to see what would work best for both sides and create a package of engagement that helps to build your pipeline. In schools, you can ask to speak to the Careers Leader. In colleges, you may want to connect to the department most relevant to your sector. In universities, you can approach the careers service to connect.

Contact your local college, training provider or university

From 11 years old

6. Become an Enterprise Adviser

As an Enterprise Adviser you will work directly with a school or college's Senior Leadership team at a strategic level - for around 8 hours per month. You can be involved in helping to shape the careers programme, using your strategic skills and business network to create opportunities with local employers and inspire students.

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/employers-volunteers/join-enterprise-adviser-network>

7. Exhibit at a careers fair

Careers fairs (both physical and virtual) give young people a chance to get to know a wide range of employers and industries in a short space of time. Think about how you can make yours stand out - why not bring along your newest or youngest employee, or consider a practical demonstration or activity young people could take part in?

Contact your local college, training provider or university

8. Offer a work experience placement

Work experience placements are typically 1-2 weeks, or can be a day or two over several weeks. This can be arranged directly with your local education organisation. To make the most of it, you can plan a short project for the student(s) to work on during the placement. Work experience is generally not paid and some companies have developed 'virtual' placements, where the student works remotely whilst getting a great insight into the organisation.

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/careers-enterprise-what-works-report-work-experience.pdf>

From 16 years old

9. Offer a T-Level placement

Every T Level student must complete an industry placement that lasts a minimum of 315 hours (approximately 45 days). This is to provide young people the invaluable opportunity to put their learning, knowledge and skills into practice in a real workplace environment. Industry placements also give employers a unique opportunity to develop new talent and help young people become work ready.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-industry-placements-employer-guide>

10. Offer an internship

Internships come in many shapes and sizes, but they should all involve giving young people a chance to work in your organisation on real and engaging projects with support and mentoring from a member of the team. CIPD have produced guidance about what a good internship looks like. In some industries, employers can offer placements alongside new T-Level qualifications.

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/internships-work_tcm18-10899.pdf; <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/employers>

11. Become an industry tutor

If you or a member of your team want the pleasure of directly engaging with young people to share your skills and experience, work with your local FE college, training provider or university to become a part-time tutor or lecturer. This can be great CPD and you can directly build the talent pipeline alongside your work.

Contact your local college, training provider or university

Career routes

A. Offer a Traineeship

For young people who are not quite ready for a job or apprenticeship, a Traineeship provides a flexible government-funded programme of up to a year. By offering a traineeship placement, you are helping to build the pipeline, 'trying before you buy' and creating a loyal workforce. Financial incentives are available.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/traineeship-information-for-employers>

B. Hire an apprentice

When hiring, you should always consider if a post might be suitable for an apprenticeship. It means your new team member will get industry-standard training alongside their work and apprentices tend to feel a stronger loyalty to their organisation. Financial incentives are available.

<https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice>

C. Hire a young person

Just as with any new employee, when hiring a young person for a role, you will want to put in place a thorough induction and think about development. Youth Employment UK provides great advice to employers when hiring a young person.

<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/the-good-youth-employment-charter/>



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