

**South Midlands
Growth Hub**

South Midlands
CAREERS HUB

THE **CAREERS &
ENTERPRISE**
COMPANY

Talent Pipeline

South Midlands Skills Hub

www.southmidlands.org.uk

Developing a talent pipeline is principally 3 activities:

1. Ensuring people are aware of the job opportunities provided by employers.
2. Making people aware of the employability attitudes, behaviours and skills needs of employers.
3. Developing relevant employability skills.

This section helps explain why we need to be involved in the development of a talent pipeline, and how and where this can be achieved efficiently and effectively.

- **Why Develop a Talent Pipeline?**
- **Work Placements vs Experience of the Workplace – Why?**
- **Work Placements vs Experience of the Workplace – How?**
- **Acting as a Governor**
- **Supporting Teachers and Tutors**

Why Develop a Talent Pipeline?

With factors such as an ageing workforce, the reduced migrant population due to the pandemic and leaving the EU, and the increasing variety of careers options, the labour market is tight and competitive.

The collaboration between businesses and educational institutions is a win-win scenario. It helps bridge skills gaps, fosters innovation, develops a robust talent pipeline, and ensures the long-term success of a business while contributing positively to society.

To ensure people are aware of the opportunities and understand and are equipped with the skills needed by employers, engagement between businesses and educational institutions is more crucial than ever to:

- **Bridge the Skills Gap** - One of the most significant challenges facing industries today is skills gaps. Many students and adults enter the workforce lacking the practical employability skills required by employers. Employers can help demonstrate relevancy and understanding, plus help develop the skills through practical experiences.
- **Workforce Planning** - Businesses that engage with education can create a steady pipeline of talent. By offering appropriate pathways, organisations can identify and nurture potential future employees. This proactive approach to talent acquisition ensures that businesses have access to a pool of well-trained and motivated individuals who understand your needs and the business.
- **Promotion of Lifelong Learning** - In a world where technology and industries are constantly evolving, lifelong learning is essential. Businesses can support education and professional development by supporting training and conversion programs, workshops, and online courses.
- **Help Keep Education Relevant** - Collaboration between businesses and educational institutions fosters strong relationships that benefit both parties. Employers can assist educational institutions gain insights into industry trends, the use of technology and other requirements helping shape curricula to ensure students acquire relevant skills, making them job-ready.
- **Fostering Innovation** - Through education engagement, businesses can tap into cutting-edge research and fresh ideas. This collaboration can lead to the development of new products, services, and technologies, giving businesses a competitive edge.
- **Benefit Society** - Engaging with education provides a conduit for businesses to contribute positively to society. By supporting educational initiatives, companies can demonstrate their commitment to

Work Placements vs Experience of the Workplace – Why?

The main difference between an experience of the workplace and a work placement in the UK is that a work placement is a temporary position offered to students or adults, while an experience of the workplace can be provided in differing formats:

Work placements

- A temporary position that's usually part of an education, pathway or employment programme. Placements are often full-time and can last from a few weeks to a year. They are designed to give people practical experience in their field of study and/or chosen career/industry.

Experience of the Workplace

"Experience of the workplace" refers to the exposure and involvement an individual has within a professional environment.

This can be gained in many ways, including:

- Work shadowing, which is observing someone in their day-to-day job.
- Site visits where people are invited to come to the workplace for a tour and/or an activity.
- Internships, which are paid periods of work that typically last 1-3 months.
- Hosting competitions and skill challenges for students and/or adults.
- A part-time job.
- Volunteering or helping friends or family within a job or business.

Work experience can help improve a person's employability, gain relevant knowledge and skills, and build a professional network.

Why?

Here are several reasons why a business should provide workplace experience other than talent pipeline development:

- **Skill Development:** Helping individuals gain practical skills and knowledge that are directly relevant to the industry.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Demonstrating a commitment to community and education by supporting the development of the future workforce.
- **Fresh Perspectives:** Gaining new ideas and innovative solutions from individuals who bring different viewpoints and up-to-date academic knowledge.
- **Employee Engagement:** Providing current employees with opportunities to mentor and train newcomers, which can enhance job satisfaction and professional development.
- **Brand Awareness:** Increasing the company's visibility and reputation among students, educational institutions, and the broader community.

- Industry-Academia Collaboration: Building strong relationships with educational institutions, which can lead to research partnerships and other collaborative opportunities.
- Adaptability and Innovation: Staying ahead of industry trends by integrating fresh talent who are often more adaptable to new technologies and methodologies.
- Workforce Diversity: Promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace by offering opportunities to a wide range of individuals from different backgrounds.

Providing workplace experience benefits both the business and the individuals involved, creating a mutually advantageous relationship that fosters productivity, growth and innovation.



Work Placements vs Experience of the Workplace – How?

Gaining workplace experience is crucial for developing practical skills, understanding workplace dynamics, and enhancing employability. It helps individuals start the transition from education to employment by providing a realistic view of the professional world.

Locally we have two main contact points for support for work placements and experience of the workplace:

- Further Education Colleges - [Colleges of the South Midlands – Delivering Skills, Boosting Business](#)
- Schools - [Employers | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

What about health and safety?

A common concern for employers is the health and safety of young people in a working environment.

Under health and safety law, students should be treated and considered as your employees. There are very few scenarios a student cannot gain experience in because of health and safety law.

For more guidance and information go to:

- [Young people at work: Work experience – Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Work experience students | Association of British Insurers](#)

Impactful Activity

This experience can encompass a variety of activities and learning opportunities, including:

- **Work Placements:** Temporary positions, often part of educational programs, where people work in a company to gain practical experience related to their studies. Examples include:
 - **Short Experiences** - Provide a useful introduction to the workplace. Students typically spend a few days within an organisation undertaking a number of activities under supervision. The experience can help understanding of the workplace, build confidence and promote the sector/role. The experience should be structured to be of value.

More information for innovative experiences with students can be found at [Workplace experiences | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

- **T-Levels** - a placement is part of a T Level course, a qualification for 16–19-year olds designed by employers. T Level students spend 80% of the course in college, and the other 20% is a meaningful industry placement, where they apply skills. This is a longer, more structured placement in the workplace for young people to develop real work skills and make a meaningful contribution to your organisation. Placements will last at least 315 hours (approx. 45 days), either in day release or blocks.

More information at:

- [T Levels and industry placement support for employers.](#)
- Further Education Colleges support - [Colleges of the South Midlands – Delivering Skills, Boosting Business](#)

- **Skills Bootcamps** - flexible training courses for adults aged 19 or over, available in a range of sectors such as digital, engineering or green skills which can be used to recruit new talent.

Skills Bootcamps are developed and delivered in partnership with your business and can be offered full or part at no cost to your business. Bootcamps can last up to 16 weeks.

More information at [Skills Bootcamps](#).

- **Supported internships for learners with an education, health and care plan** - Supported internships combine studying with a work placement. They are available for young people, aged 16 to 24, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. A supported internship is a free government scheme but you can choose to pay the intern or cover their expenses, but this is not a requirement. A work placement can range from 6 to 12 months.

More information at [Supported internships for learners with an EHC plan](#).

- **Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP)** - A SWAP offers jobseekers the opportunity to train and work with your business. You can offer a SWAP to individuals 16 and over who are claiming benefits. The programme includes pre-employment training, a short work placement, and a job interview or help with the application process. This programme is free and a SWAP can last up to 6 weeks.

More information at [Sector-based Work Academy Programme \(SWAP\)](#).

- **Site Visits:** Opening your doors to showcase your business/organisation and what you do is a good starting point to provide young people their first experience of the workplace.

This activity helps to show those 'hidden' jobs, e.g. financial roles, HR, marketing, etc, often found in businesses and works best if staff are briefed and asked to talk about their role, what skills they use and their career path. An interactive activity during the visit adds value and could be catalyst for a follow up activity such as a competition to reinforce the impact of the engagement.

Typical cohorts include later primary school ages, age 11-14 years old in secondary schools and Special Educational Needs and Disability students (SEND).

Support to start this type of activity is at [Employers & Volunteers – South Midlands Careers Hub](#).

- **Work experience:** Work experience refers to the time spent working in a job or professional environment, enhance employability and to gain practical skills and knowledge related to a specific role or industry. It can take various forms, including:

Apprenticeships – Apprenticeships are available for individuals over the age of 16 and combine on the job training with 20% study. They can be used with new or current staff. Apprenticeships are available for a number of roles and start at intermediate level going up to a university degree level.

Find out more at:

- [Find training and employment schemes for your business – Apprenticeships](#).
- Further Education Colleges – [Colleges of the South Midlands – Delivering Skills, Boosting Business](#)

Higher Education (University) Internships and Placements – Some higher education courses include a period spent in industry. Students have the opportunity to develop relevant employability skills and the longer placements also provide an additional resource and an opportunity to assess a student's capability for future recruitment.

Useful links:

- [Making internships work: an intern's guide](#)
- [Employment rights and pay for interns – GOV.UK](#)
- [Business & Community Engagement | University of Bedfordshire](#)
- [Work-based Learning and Placements | University of Northampton](#)
- [Host a student internship or project | Cranfield University](#)
- [Internships and work placements for students and graduates | Santander Universities | The Open University](#)

Part-Time Jobs – Employment that involves working fewer hours than a full-time job, providing valuable experience while allowing time for other commitments, such as education.

- **Job Shadowing:** Facilitating the observing of professionals in their daily roles to understand the skills required, responsibilities and tasks associated with specific jobs. Most job shadowing takes place over one to three days.
- **Volunteering:** People offering time/skills to an organisation without financial compensation can provide the organisation with additional resource and the individual valuable workplace experience. Volunteers would normally not be expected to be responsible for specific roles or projects.
- **Careers Hub South Midlands:** Part of the Careers and Enterprise Company, a national scheme, supported by the Department of Education working with employers, business volunteers and sector bodies in England, supporting them to engage with schools, colleges and other education settings to identify simple, practical and meaningful ways to maximise their impact.

Getting involved can help build your brand, make recruitment more effective, help build your talent pipeline, and ensure connection to local people is deeper. It can help your business to:

- Influence and inspire more young people to enter your industry, collaborate with like-minded businesses and have a greater collective impact.
- Support those who face the biggest barriers to reaching their potential when they leave education.
- Increase employee engagement and develop their key skills and experience through getting them involved as an Industry Champion or Industry Partner
- Build a diverse future talent pipeline and help fill skills gaps.

The Careers Hub South Midlands facilitates this through:

- **Employer Standards:** A tool developed to help businesses to improve the engagement between young people and employers using self-assessment against nine national benchmarks, comparing results on a sectoral, regional, and scalable basis. [Employer Standards – South Midlands Careers Hub](#)
- **Cornerstone Employers:** Help set the agenda locally; advocating for meaningful business and education partnership, getting involved with initiatives, and in many cases contributing to the wider skills strategy. [Become a Cornerstone Employer – South Midlands Careers Hub](#)
- **Industry Partners (Enterprise Advisers):** Partner with a school or college for a period of time, offering careers education support as a consultant, critical friend and coach, or to support a specific project. [Industry Partners – South Midlands Careers Hub](#)
- **Industry Champions:** Role models who inspire and help prepare young people for the world of work, creating new perspectives and raising aspirations. Volunteering is on an ad-hoc basis and can include activities such as careers talks, mock interviews, careers events, industry immersion days, work experience, and workplace site visits. [Industry Champions – South Midlands Careers Hub](#)

- **Promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM):** There is an increasing need for students pursuing careers in STEM with technology creating opportunities and an ageing workforce. Data shows that we currently do not have enough young people in the STEM talent pipeline and employers have an important role in inspiring people and myth busting about the industries.

Programmes with evidence of impact are:

- **Primary Engineer:** Have an engineering curriculum that spans Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education institutions. Its core aims include; the development of young people through engagement with engineering, the promotion of engineering careers through inspiring programmes and competitions, the development of engineering skills for teachers and practitioners addressing the inequalities in engineering. The project-based learning approach enables young people to engage with practical math's and science alongside creative problem solving and literacy whilst also developing resilience and curiosity. [Engineers - Primary Engineer](#)
 - **STEM Ambassadors:** Volunteers who bring real-life examples of STEM careers into schools, colleges, and universities across the UK. They help to break stereotypes and offer engaging activities exploring STEM pathways. [Become a STEM Ambassador](#)
 - **MK STEM Awards:** A celebration of achievements within the STEM community in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area for STEM related industries, organisations and individuals. [MK STEM Awards 2025](#)
 - **STEAM Northants:** STEAM Northants combines a range of free activities, workshops, drop-in areas, and shows to inspire and enthuse young people in all areas of STEAM at the University of Northampton. This event for Northamptonshire Schools takes over our Waterside Campus and attracts in excess of over 3,000 visitors, from age 10 to 18, with over 70 exhibitors and companies inspiring and promoting all things Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths. [STEAM Northants | University of Northampton](#)
- **Other Engagement with Schools and Colleges:**
 - Generation Logistics: An initiative to highlight the profile of the sector and find and engage the next generation of logistics talent by highlighting the opportunities on offer, from entry-level pathways through to graduate programmes. [Generation Logistics | Where Talent Meets Opportunity](#)
 - Skills Builder Partnership: Skills Builder Partnership, a not-for-profit social enterprise, is a global movement of employers, educators, and impact organisations working together to ensure that one day, young people build the essential skills to succeed. [Employers - Skills Builder](#)
 - Young Enterprise: A national charity that aims to motivate young people to succeed in the world of work by equipping them with the work skills, knowledge and confidence they need. The charity facilitates applied learning through Enterprise Education, identifying and initiating opportunities as well as adapting responses to situations, and Financial Education, a programme that equips young people to manage their money and develop attitudes to risk, and become aware of their own behaviour and emotions when making financial decisions through real-life scenarios. There are many ways to get involved. [Get Involved - Young Enterprise & Young Money](#)

Acting as a Governor

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Becoming a school governor is a rewarding opportunity to make a significant impact on the education and development of people in your community. Reasons to consider this role include:

- **Help Shape the Future:** As a school governor, you have the chance to influence the strategic direction of the school, to support improving education for its students.
- **Support Your Community:** Give back to your community to help create a positive and supportive learning environment, benefiting not just the students, but also their families and the wider community.
- **Develop New Skills:** Serving as a governor offers numerous personal and professional development opportunities. You will gain experience in areas such as strategic planning, and financial management. It will also give you a better understanding of education and the unseen challenges faced within a school/college.
- **Collaborate with Diverse Perspectives:** You will work with a diverse group of people, including other governors, school staff, and parents. This collaboration can broaden your perspective and enhance your problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- **Make a Difference:** Knowing that your efforts contribute to the success and well-being of students can be incredibly fulfilling. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are making a tangible difference in their lives.
- **Advocate for Education:** As a governor, you are a champion for education, by supporting the school to meet the needs of students and provide a high-quality learning experience.

Becoming a school governor is a fantastic way to make a meaningful impact.

For more information go to:

- [Become a school governor - Governors for Schools](#)
- [Bedford - School governors | Bedford Borough Council](#)
- [Central Bedfordshire - School governors | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)
- [Luton - Luton Governor Services](#)
- [Milton Keynes - School governance | Milton Keynes City Council](#)
- [North Northamptonshire - Become a governor | North Northamptonshire Council](#)
- [West Northamptonshire - Become a governor | West Northamptonshire Council](#)

The background features a pair of sneakers, one in the foreground and one slightly behind it, both rendered in a light, semi-transparent style. A large, multi-pointed starburst or sunburst graphic is centered behind the sneakers, creating a bright, glowing effect. The overall color palette is a mix of light and dark greys.

Supporting Teachers and Tutors

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Inviting teachers/tutors into your workplace has benefits for your business, for educators, and importantly, for the people that will form the workforce of the future.

Providing this opportunity can help ensure people in education know about your industry and the skills needed whilst also helping teachers stay up to date with your industry and bring this to life in their provision.

There can also be opportunities for additional engagement through providing specialist knowledge for classes, helping design a course and/or project-based learning, applying learning and skills to solve problems and create outputs that mimic work within employment.

This support can be extended into contributing or advising on facilities or specialist equipment.

For more information go to:

- Professional development for teachers [Teacher encounters - tools and resources | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)
- Further Education Colleges - [Colleges of the South Midlands - Delivering Skills, Boosting Business](#)