

Employer Partnerships in Education – A framework to support evaluation and improvement

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework to support primary and secondary schools, early years, colleges, local authorities, DYW Regional Groups and employers to have a shared understanding of the range of employer partnerships, to support improvement and to help take stock of progress. This will lead to more robust evidence to support evaluation of these employer partnerships and the impact of these partnerships on all learners, and highlight areas for improvement.

The framework builds on the initial Guidance on School/Employer Partnerships 2015 and draws on the learning from the work of the 21 DYW Regional Employer Groups since 2015. It is supported by practical tools: **How to get the best employer engagement for the young people in your school – A Strategic Toolkit and the School-Employer Partnership (SEP) Framework.**

Background

One of the key recommendations of the Youth Employment Strategy: Developing the Young Workforce is to bring industry/ employers and education closer together in collaborative partnerships. Recommendation 15 states that: *during 2018/19 meaningful and productive partnerships will be operating in all secondary schools.* By doing so, the key ambition – aligned to the wider ambitions of Developing the Young Workforce – is that all young people, through support from employers will become better equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience they will need to flourish in work. This will also make a strong contribution to realising the Scottish Government’s ambition for every school cluster (i.e. secondaries and associated primary schools) to be working with a STEM partner from the public, private or third sectors by 2020.

Guidance on school-employer partnerships (School Employer Partnership guidance) was developed in 2015 collaboratively with education, local authorities, employers and DYW Regional Groups. The guidance aims to encourage and support these partnerships. It also makes clear that we should recognise the variety of partnerships that can contribute towards achieving the milestone and that those partnerships should also be encouraged in primary schools. This framework supports this guidance and recognises the need to encourage more partnerships at a strategic level, across a range of sectors and which meet the needs of all learners.

Many settings across the system in Scotland now have a partnership (or partnerships) with an employer (or employers) in place. This framework seeks to support establishments to move towards the ambition of forming more long-term relationships with at least one employer to what is defined as a strategic partnership. This partnership will complement other activity in schools.

The definition of a strategic partnership

A strategic partnership will focus on working together to support and inform curriculum planning and delivery and provide work-related and contextualised learning experiences. Whilst establishments and employers will continue to work on other activities which encompass a range of sectors, the long-term ambition is that of curriculum influence.

It is recognised that establishments should have a partnership with a number of employers. This is important to ensure there is equity of offering across a number of sectors and opportunities to meet the needs of all learners.

Curriculum influence will vary in different locations, but will involve seeking guidance from employers on the needs of their sector and the labour market more generally. Establishments will then be able to plan curriculum activity across the calendar year focussed on contextualising learning to make it relevant to the world of work. Curriculum influence is likely to see enhancements to educational strategies and improvement plans to represent a clear focus on adapting their approach to meet the needs of learners and the demands of the future labour market.

The partnership is between the establishment and the employer, but other agencies can assist with shaping the particular offer, for example: local authority education departments, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, colleges and DYW Regional Groups. As they develop, Regional Improvement Collaboratives will also provide a source of expertise. . As establishments develop strategic partnerships with employers, other agencies may support both parties to understand where they can have the greatest impact for learners. It is important that partnerships which seek to move towards curriculum influence are developed collaboratively with a range of partners and specialists.

It is recognised that establishments will embark on a range of collaborations with employers indirectly or through a third party. A local authority might manage a partnership with an employer across a number of settings. Organisations such as Career Ready will provide links with employers through their programmes. Foundation Apprenticeships are an example where the employer relationship is likely to have been generated by a college.

A continuum of participation

It is important to capture the range of partnership activity and measure its impact. Three broad definitions are proposed to define the types of employer partnerships and the opportunities they provide to young people. Alongside partnerships at each stage of the continuum, establishments should have in place at least one strategic employer partnership which is ultimately embedded in school improvement planning. However, this should not be read as a tiered system in recognition that some partnerships will not move between categories.

Three categories of partnership working with employers can be identified in a continuum of participation.

Engagement

Initial engagements involving employers and education to deliver activities/ learning outcomes would fall into the **engagement** category. From a particular establishment perspective, this could be one-off activity/ interaction involving numerous employers in different events.

Collaboration

Greater **collaboration** is likely to see a longer term commitment by the establishment and employer (or employers) to further or future activity which focusses on a more structured approach with a view to exerting more influence on the needs of learners and the curriculum. This collaboration is likely to see establishments having more engagement with a particular cohort of employers with increased frequency, scale or intensity.

Influencing

As this collaboration develops, establishments are likely to see more **influencing** of the curriculum. In this category partnerships are likely to be with only a single or small number of employers who may have a significant influence on the curriculum offer. A partnership at the influencing stage will take time and a concerted effort by the establishment or cluster and the employer, but is likely to see buy-in from the headteacher, subject teachers and school DYW leads. For these partnerships, the establishment is likely to see the impact of meaningful contextualised learning and the benefits of employer engagement in formulating the curriculum offer. Such a relationship will be in place over a number of years.

It is important that for each establishment we acknowledge indirect employer relationships, which are likely to sit under the 'collaboration' or 'influencing' categories of the continuum. An employer relationship can add value, regardless of the number of establishments, employers, or third parties involved. A wide breadth of local and specialist opportunities should be encouraged to meet the needs of all young people.

The table below sets out some of the possible activity that could happen under each category – although this will vary between partnerships.

| | <u>Strategic Partnership</u> | |
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| <u>Engagement</u> | <u>Collaboration</u> | <u>Influencing</u> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial engagement, likely to be one-off activity. - Involving numerous employers in different events. - Use of Marketplace to provide an employer offer to schools. <p><u>Examples</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work inspiration activity – interview sessions, career talks, skills events - careers event/ fayres - mock interviews - workplace visits - practical demonstrations in the learning environment (classroom) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likely to see a commitment by the establishment and employer to develop future activity. - More than just a one-off activity. - Smaller cohort of employers with increased frequency, scale or intensity of activity. - More structured approach with a view to exerting more influence on the needs of learners and the curriculum. - Use of Marketplace to provide an employer offer to schools. - partnership working between establishments and employers is starting to build capacity and capability for both. <p><u>Examples</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mentoring - formal employability or subject specific (e.g. STEM) inspirational activities/ awards - work experience placements for learners and teachers/practitioners - contextualised learning (STEM subjects or languages for example) - supporting Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase of school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The highest level of collaboration is likely to come from a long-term, planned and sustainable partnership. - Likely to be with only a single or small number of employers. - Likely to have a significant influence on the curriculum offer. - Structured, more intensive activity and clearly focused on the highest level of impact. - Clearly focussed on the long-term needs and aspirations of learners with clear links to the needs of the labour market. - Expertise is shared through mutual professional development so establishments and employers learn with and from each other <p><u>Examples</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a programme between the establishment and employer which focusses on regular delivery of an activity focussed on a particular topic/ subject area - An employer collaborating with teachers to deliver sessions / contributing to a lesson in the classroom on workplace skills and careers - training visits and exchanges help teachers understand the demands of the workplace. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inputting to establishment improvement plans and educational strategies - employers meeting with the headteacher or subject teachers to talk about the needs of their sector and the labour market - sharing labour market intelligence - Foundation Apprenticeships - employer input to establishment year calander - agreeing times of the year for activity - evaluating, improving and enhancing offers - measuring the positive destinations of young people - establishments and employers engaging with SDS' regional managers to understand local labour market - employers sharing future workforce planning with establishments to identify labour market needs - sector skills bodies engaging with employers and establishments to identify future skills needs - offering mentoring opportunities to pupils |
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The size and breadth of purpose of some employers will need to be taken into account. Whilst we want to encourage all employers to do all they can and acknowledge that engagement it will be unlikely, for example, that a micro business will be able to form a full strategic partnership.

Measuring progress

Progress will need to be understood both quantitatively and qualitatively to ensure a rounded picture. Using both will allow us to understand if strategic partnerships have increased and if the quality of partnerships has developed. Progress reporting should also be capable of external scrutiny.

To enable this rounded approach, establishments will self-evaluate their partnerships, using the continuum to identify the stages of their partnerships.

DYW regional groups will be asked to measure the number of partnerships they have facilitated, the quality of those and the impact as well as the longevity of the partnership. This process will form part of wider reporting arrangements for national Key Performance Indicators which have been set by the Scottish Government for the DYW Programme and the STEM education and training strategy. For the latter, we will ask DYW Regional Groups to record which of the partnerships they have facilitated have a STEM focus.

DYW groups may also wish to look at partnerships that focus on other areas of the curriculum or educational priorities such as literacy, languages or creativity.

The quantitative measurement will be the number of partnerships established and the number of employers engaged in partnerships in instances where establishments are working with more than one employer.

The qualitative measurement will be the quality of partnerships in place. Again the continuum will provide a guide as to what stage a partnership is defined. Through self-evaluation and through DYW Regional Group reporting, we will formulate meaningful feedback on the impact of each partnership at each stage. This will focus on activity delivered through partnerships and will take account of all partnerships at each stage of the continuum. It will also seek to ensure that partnerships cover all learners and interests.

We will begin measuring progress on the development of strategic partnerships from the beginning of academic year 2018/19 to allow us to establish baseline data for future comparisons.

Timeline

During 2017-18, we will see school-industry partnerships operating in most secondary schools.

During 2018-19, we will see meaningful and productive school-employer partnerships operating in all secondary schools and schools moving through the stages of the continuum. We will begin to measure progress to allow us to establish baseline data.

During 2019-2020, we will see the meaningful impact on the education system, influencing of the school curriculum and enhancing employer satisfaction.

During 2020-2021, we will see sustainable structures to support employers' active contribution in place and contributing effectively to the development of the young workforce.

Support for establishing a partnership

In developing and taking forward employer partnerships in education, those involved should refer to the suite of guidance published in September 2015 - Guidance for school employer partnerships, Career Education Standard (3-18), and Work Placements Standard. Toolkits are also available on the Education Scotland website. Schools and employers interested in forming partnerships with a STEM focus may also like to look at the STEM self-evaluation and improvement framework published by Education Scotland in December 2017.

Over time you should reflect on the partnership, the activities delivered, and if they had the impact that was intended. It is likely approaches will need to be adapted to meet the needs of both the establishment and the employers involved, but any approach should remain focussed on moving towards a model which demonstrates meaningful impact and influence on learners and the curriculum offer in schools. Throughout the continuum of employer partnerships there is a range of support from a number of agencies and organisations through national and local offers that may help to establish and sustain the partnerships for both employers and education. None of these offerings are restricted to a particular category of partnership. DYW Regional Groups will play a critical role in assisting establishments and employers to enter new partnerships or develop existing partnerships. Education Scotland and local authority education departments will play an important role in assisting them to consider the focus of their partnership and in particular those which are likely to move towards a strategic partnership and that of curriculum influence. Regional Improvement Collaboratives will provide a source of expertise through sharing evidence and targeted advice through the education system to allow them to determine the most appropriate and partnerships.

Collaboration and sharing of experience between will allow for a greater understanding of what works well, the most effective approach to developing partnerships and utilising resource effectively.