

How to get the best employer engagement for the young people in your school – A Strategic Toolkit

The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (the "Wood Commission") had the goal of reducing youth unemployment by better preparing young people for their transition from education to work. In response to the Commission's findings, in 2014 the Scottish Government published [Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#). One of its key recommendations was to develop employer-led regional Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) groups that were to coordinate and facilitate employer engagement in schools. To that end, Scottish Government and Education Scotland developed [guidance documents](#) for schools, employers, DYW regional groups and local authorities to encourage and support school/employer partnerships.

There have been significant developments and successes since the early formation of the regional DYW groups, including the Scottish Government's target to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021 having been achieved [four years ahead of schedule](#).

Recognising the importance of schools having more long-term strategic partnerships with employers, a new guidance Employer Partnerships in Education: support for evaluation and improvement was developed in October 2018. This describes school-employer partnerships at three levels:

1. **Engagement**, likely to involve a one-off activity by an employer such as an interview session or a career activity
2. **Collaboration**, a longer-term commitment between the employer and the school, such as regular contextualised learning or work experience
3. **Influencing**, a long-term partnership where the employer has considerable influence on the curriculum offer of the schools through, for example, an employer contributing to lessons in the classroom.

There is increasing evidence that appropriate and high-quality employer interaction will support young people in acquiring essential employability skills, and that specific employer interactions can help pupils with specific needs at different stages. In April 2018, [Rocket Science reviewed this evidence for DYW Glasgow](#). Education Scotland, working with DYW Glasgow and DYW Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian, felt that the evidence identified in this review should be translated into practical guidance for schools. This Strategic Toolkit is the result.

The Strategic Toolkit is designed to be used by head teachers, DYW leads, career advisors, school employability staff and teachers to help them develop their employer engagement offer. There are three sections:

1. **Learning tools**, outlining the wider context of employer engagement and how employer engagement can help schools support their young people
2. **Reflection tools**, which can help you reflect on your school's current employer engagement offer and how it could be further enhanced
3. **Development tools**, giving you the chance to develop your school's current employer engagement offer.

There is an overall logical sequence to the tools – i.e. you could work your way through the toolkit from beginning to end – but they are also self-contained and can be used as stand-alone tools.

This Strategic Toolkit is designed to support schools with the development of their employer engagement offer. It does not cover all aspects of interests of a school's DYW offer. You may wish to consider these other relevant documents alongside this toolkit:

- [DYW Career Education Standard \(3-18\)](#)
- [DYW Work Placements Standard](#)
- [DYW Guidance document for School/Employer Partnerships](#)
- [Employer Partnerships in Education: support for evaluation and improvement](#)
- [School Employer Partnership Framework](#)
- [Skills Development Scotland's regional and sector-specific Skills Investment Plans](#)
- [How Good is Our School? \(fourth edition\): Self-evaluation and improvement framework for schools in Scotland](#)
- [Education Scotland's Self-Evaluation Guide for School/College Partnerships](#)
- [DYW Regional Groups](#)

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Learning Tool 1 - Setting the context

The table below gives you a sense of the bigger picture of how engaging with employers can help young people make a successful transition to work. It describes the challenges young people can face in their transition to work, and how employers can help them meet these challenges.

Young people's transition can be challenging because of:	Employer engagement can help meet this challenge through:
<p>Labour market developments making young people's transition into work challenging, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The labour market and occupational profiles have become more complex • The labour market has become more competitive • The labour market is fast-changing which has led to a shift from an emphasis on technical skills to the ability to apply new knowledge successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing young people with a better idea of job roles and the corresponding educational and professional pathways • Equipping young people with the transition skills and resilience to compete in the labour market • Emphasising the importance of applied learning to teachers and young people
<p>A mismatch between career aspirations and labour market demand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing young people and teachers with clearer ideas of labour market developments and sectors of growth • Widening and equalising young people's gendered understanding of particular career paths
<p>Young people lack the transition skills for a successful transition from school to work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping young people with the transition skills, such as job search, CV and interview skills, that are required to make a successful transition from school to work, through mentoring, advice and guidance, and mock interviews
<p>Young people are often unaware of the basic work readiness behaviours (e.g. dress code, punctuality, communication style) that are expected of them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting employers – for example in the context of a mentoring relationship or work placement – can help young people to better understand and develop the work readiness behaviours that are expected of them in a workplace

Source: DYW Glasgow, 2018, [The impact of employers engagement with schools](#); The second row of the table is based on Mann, A & Huddleston, P 2017, 'Schools and the twenty-first century labour market: perspectives on structural change', [British Journal of Guidance and Counselling](#).

Learning Tool 2 – The Education-Employer Partnership Framework

The table below describes the three different types of partnerships between schools and employers outlined in the Scottish Government guidance *Employer Partnerships in Education: support for evaluation and improvement*, and the type of employer engagement activities that follow from each relationship.

For examples and illustrations of what different activities look like in practice, have a look at [Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub](#).

	Engagement	Collaboration	Influencing
Type of partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to be a one-off activity • Involving numerous employers in one event • Use of Marketplace and Founder4Schools to provide an employer offer to schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than just a one-off activity; increased frequency of activity • Commitment by the school and an employer to develop future activities • Employer starting to influence curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term, planned and sustainable partnership • Likely to be with only a single or small number of employers with significant influence on curriculum offer • Structured, more intensive activity focused on long-term needs and aspirations of learners with clear links to the labour market • Mutual professional development between school staff and employers
Type of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview sessions • Career talks/event/fairs • Skills event • Mock interview • Workplace visit • Practical demonstration in the learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal employability or subject-specific inspirational activities/awards • Work experience placements • Contextualised learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular delivery of an activity • Training visits to employers for teachers • Employers inputting to improvement plans and educational strategies • School and employers engaging with SDS's regional manager to understand local labour market • Employers sharing future workforce planning with school • Mentoring • Supporting Foundation Apprenticeships

Learning Tool 3 – How to ensure that your young people benefit most from engaging with employers

This learning tool identifies six elements of what really works in employer engagement and provides an opportunity for you to think about the practical implications this has for your school's employer engagement offer.

Best practice element	What does the research say	What do you want to do to ensure...
Starting early	Children develop career aspirations at an early age and their socioeconomic background and gender influences their aspirations	...as early a start as possible?
Volume matters	The more often young people engage with employers, the more likely it is that they are successful in their transition to work	...that young people experience more engagements with employers?
Timing matters	Different employer engagement activities have different roles depending on the stage that young people are at on their educational journey	...that young people have access to appropriate experiences at every stage of their learning journey?
Tailoring activities	While some young people benefit more from sustained engagement (e.g. mentoring), others benefit more from targeted intervention (e.g. CV training)	...that young people get more experience tailored to their needs and situation?
Variety of engagements	Considering all of the above, young people benefit from having a variety of engagements with employers	...that young people have a greater variety of engagements with employers?
Quality matters	The more helpful young people find an employer engagement activity, the greater its impact on their transition to the world of work	...that young people receive high quality experiences?

Source: DYW Glasgow, 2018, [The impact of employers engagement with schools](#)

For further evidence on best practice have a look at published research of [Education and Employers](#).

Learning Tool 4 – How to support your young people in the senior phase in their post-school transition

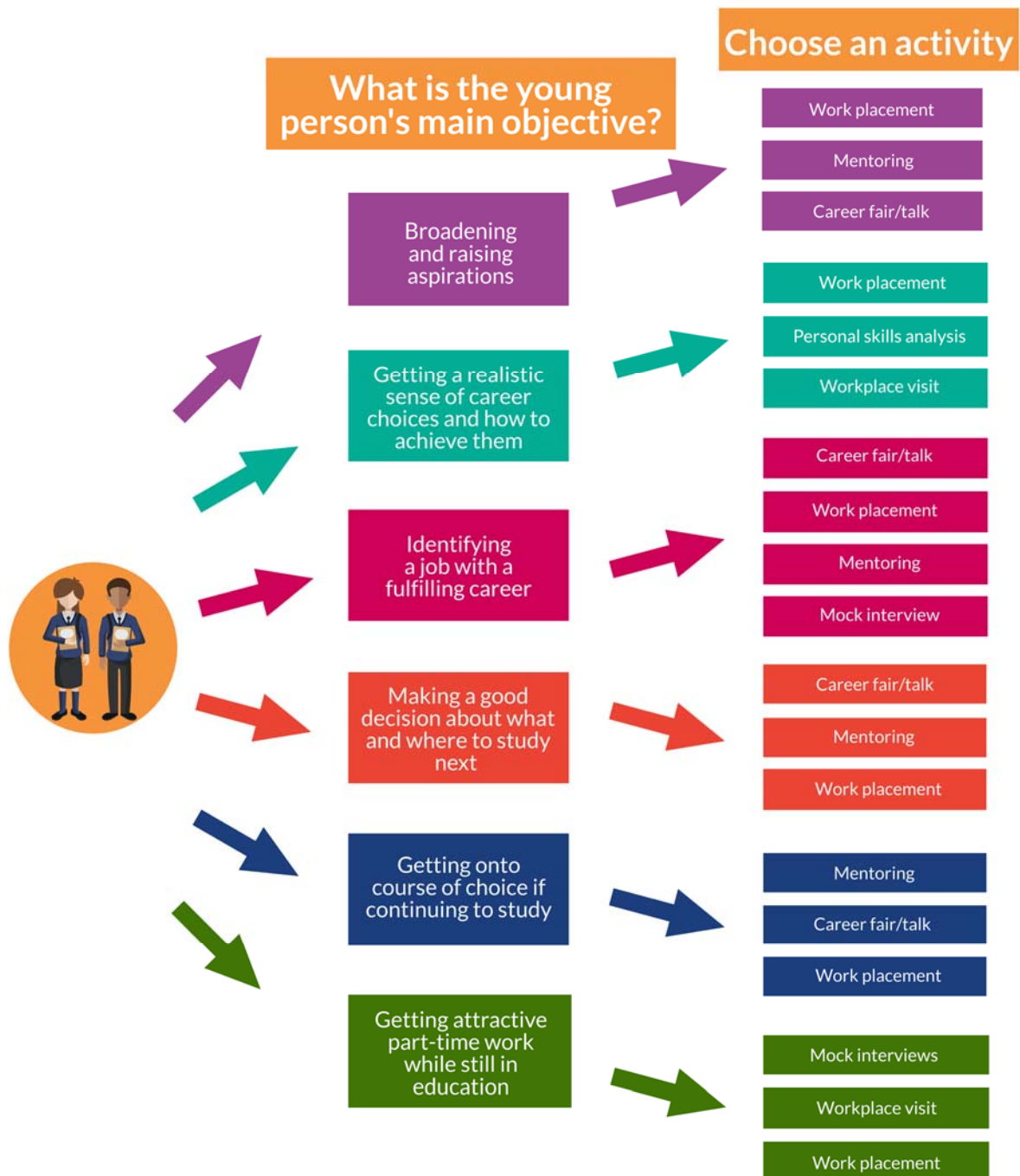
Young people can find the transition to education or work after school difficult, but engaging with employers can help. [Previous research](#) and experience has shown that particular activities are most useful for achieving a range of different outcomes:

- Broadening and raising aspirations
- Getting a realistic sense of career choices and how to achieve them
- Identifying a job with a fulfilling career
- Making a good decision about what and where to study next
- Getting onto course of choice if continuing to study
- Getting attractive part-time work while still in education

On the next page you can see the three or four activities which are considered to be most helpful for achieving those outcomes.

When choosing an activity for a particular group of young people in the senior phase, think about the outcome they want to achieve and see what is considered to be the most suitable activity for achieving this particular outcome. This does not mean that this will necessarily be the best activity for a particular group of young people.

Choosing an activity for young people in the senior phase



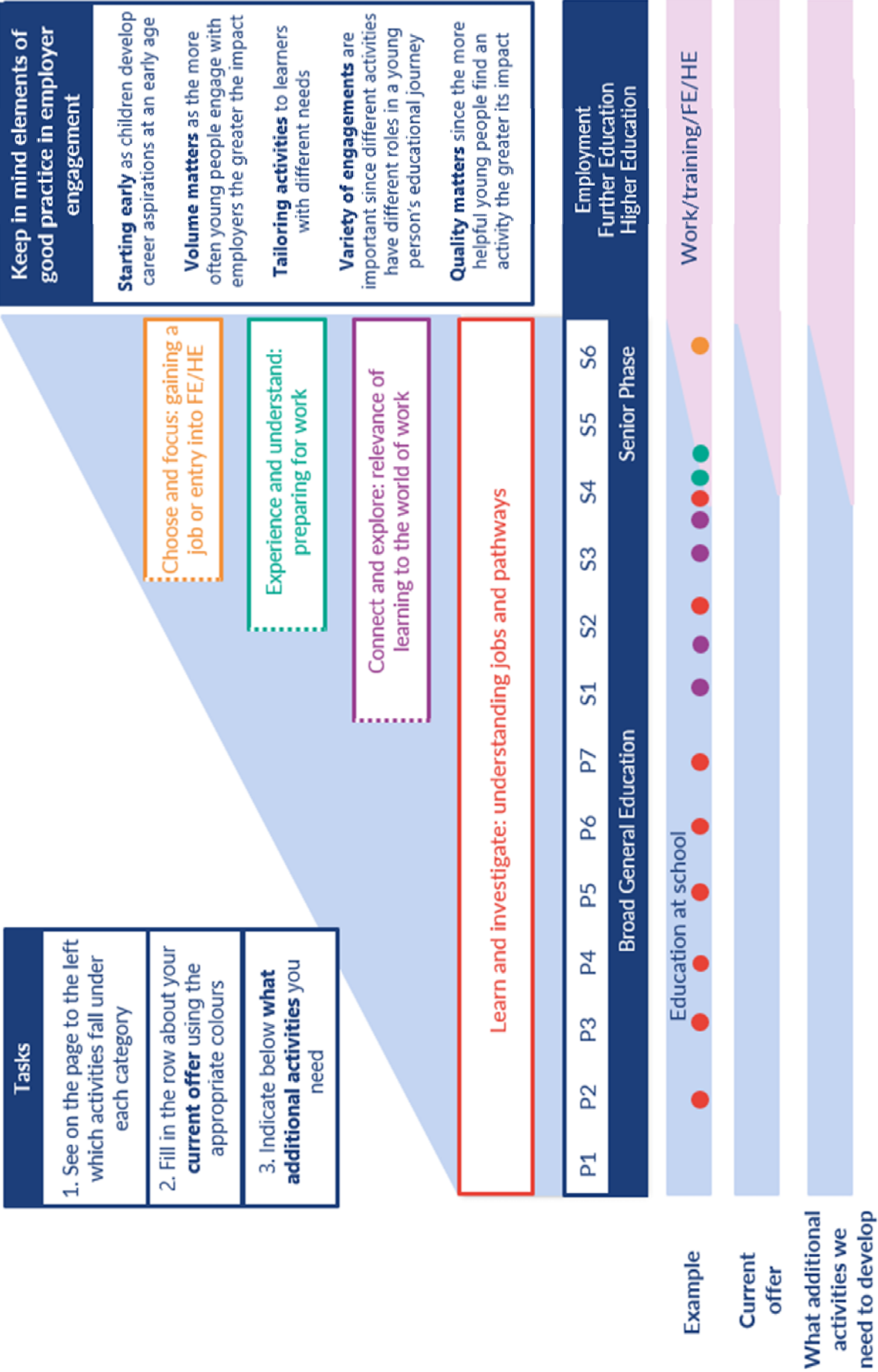
Reflection Tool 1 - The role and timing of different employer engagement activities

When building a portfolio of different employer engagement activities or deciding on particular activity for a group of young people, it can be useful to consider the **role** played by different employer engagement activities.

And the role of employer engagement activities has implications for the best **timing** of different employer engagement activities in a young person's educational journey. For example, whether their role is to highlight the relevance of learning to the world of work or prepare young people for work. You can use the tool overleaf to think about your current employer engagement offer in relation to the roles and best timing for different employer engagement activities.

Role of engagement	Employer engagement activity
Learn and investigate: understanding jobs and pathways	Mentoring
	Personal skills analysis
	Career fairs
	Career talk
	Former pupils telling their stories
	Career advice to teachers/career advisors
	Work placement
Connect and explore: relevance of learning to the world of work	Teaching support
	Workplace visit
	Curriculum support
Experience and understand: preparing for work (including building skills and confidence)	Workplace visit
	Enterprise competitions
	Work placement
	Workplace project
Choose and focus: gaining a job or entry to further/higher education	CV training
	Mock interviews
	Work placement

Source: Midlothian Council, 2016, Review of Work Experience, available at: [DYW Glasgow, 2018 The impact of employers engagement with schools](#).



Reflection Tool 2 – What my school’s current employer engagement offer looks like

This tool helps you to reflect on your current employer engagement offer and where there may be gaps in the offer.

Employers of different sizes offer different types of experiences to young people, and you may want to make sure that your offer reflects the range of employers in the local and national economy.

Size of business	Type of experience	Number/% of businesses in Scotland	Number/% of employees in Scotland
Micro-businesses (0-9 employees)	Can provide a ‘family atmosphere’, a wide range of experiences and insights (from dealing directly with customers to back office roles). Young people often have a lot of responsibility, but also close supervision.	170,000 96%	700,000 36%
SMEs (10 – 249 employees)	Cover a wide range of experiences and their engagement in school partnerships is often driven by the commitment of their leadership. Some responsibility for young people.	4,000 2%	270,000 14%
Large organisations (250 employees and above)	Have significant HR resources and can provide well-designed and supported experiences – either in terms of depth or breadth. Young people probably have little or no responsibility, but are likely to have access to careful support and supervision available. These organisations are able to contribute to employer engagement activities in a wide range of ways, ranging from site visits to contributing to the curriculum in school.	2,400 1%	965,000 50%
Public sector employers (NHS, Local authorities, Education)	A major source of job opportunities in every local authority area are usually the NHS, Local Authorities and Education Providers (FE colleges and Universities). More of these are now developing a carefully designed range of well supported activities, and they will often link these to long term recruitment needs.		20%

Source: [Scottish Government](#)

The table below provides an opportunity to compare your current range of activities offered by employers of different sectors in your school, the size of their business, and the year group(s) for which they offer an activity. Going through the table will allow you to identify gaps in your current offer.

Use this tool alongside [SDS' Skills Investment Plans](#) and [SDS' RSA Data Matrix](#).

Sector	Number/% of businesses in Scotland	Number/% of employees in Scotland	Your current offer		
			Type of activity(eis) offered	Size of business(es)	Year group(s)
A, B, D, E Primary Industries*	19,000/11%	120,000/6%	<i>Eg : Work experience</i>	<i>SME</i>	<i>S4, S5, S6</i>
Manufacturing	9,500/5%	184,000/9%			
Construction	20,400/12%	131,500/7%			
Wholesale, retail and repairs	24,000/14%	363,000/19%			
Transport and storage	5,750/3%	93,500/5%			
Accommodation and food service activities	13,750/8%	198,000/10%			
Information and communication	10,500/6%	67,000/3%			
Financial and insurance activities	2,250/1%	83,000/4%			
Real estate activities	5,500/3%	32,000/2%			
Professional, scientific and technical activities	31,650/18%	149,800/8%			
Administrative and support service activities	12,800/7%	172,750/9%			
Education, human health and social work activities	8,700/5%	240,000/12%			

Arts, entertainment and recreation	4,000/ 2%	61,500/ 3%			
Other service activities	8,500/ 5%	44,000/ 2%			

Source: [Scottish Government](#).

** A=Agriculture, forestry and fishing; B=Mining and quarrying; D=Electricity, gas, steam, and air condition supply; E=Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities*

Reflection Tool 3 – Identifying development needs

Having reflected on your employer engagement offer in the previous tool, you can use this table to assess initial priorities for developing your employer engagement offer. It lists different aspects of your employer engagement offer and allows you to indicate whether you think the development needs for each of these aspects are of low, medium or high priority for you and your school. You can take initial notes about initial priorities you identified at the bottom of the page.

Developmental needs	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority
The need to provide a <i>more complete set of school/employer activities</i>			
The need to ensure that <i>each year group has the range of activities</i> they can benefit from			
The need to offer a more complete set of activities <i>across the range of employment sectors</i>			
The need to <i>extend the size range of the employers</i> we work with			
The need to improve the way we <i>match experiences</i> to stage and the needs of individual young people			

My priorities for development are:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings present.

Development Tool 1 – Establishing concrete priorities for development

Based on the areas you indicated as high priority areas in reflection tool 3, this tool allows you to identify on the left-hand side of the table below the activities that you would like to develop, by what kind of employer and for what year group (see example). The remaining columns will help you to think about whether, in order to develop a new activity, you can approach a current employer about extending what they currently offer, or whether you need to approach a new employer. If the latter, record whether you have an initial idea of which employer may be suitable, after which your DYW group will be able to help you identify specific employers.

[illegible]

Development Tool 2 – Identifying the right kind of employer for your priority areas

If in the previous tool you have identified the need to develop new employer relationships, [your local DYW group](#) will be able to help you identify appropriate employers. DYW Regional Groups are able to facilitate engagement between schools and employers, ensuring both are able to collaborate within their capacity.

However, you may have ideas about employers who may be particularly keen to engage with your school's young people and this tool will help you identify the right employer for your priority areas. Apart from working with your local DYW group, there are a number of ways in which you can find out about employers:

- **Draw on the knowledge and contacts of your existing partners:** Speak to one of the employers with whom you already have a relationship to see whether they can point you in the direction of an employer that you are looking for
- **Use your school's parent network:** Use the parent network in your school to identify the employer you need
- [Marketplace](#) is a platform connecting schools and colleges with employers. Search for opportunities that are being offered by employers in your priority areas.
- [Founder4Schools](#) connects educators with business leaders that offer encounters with young people

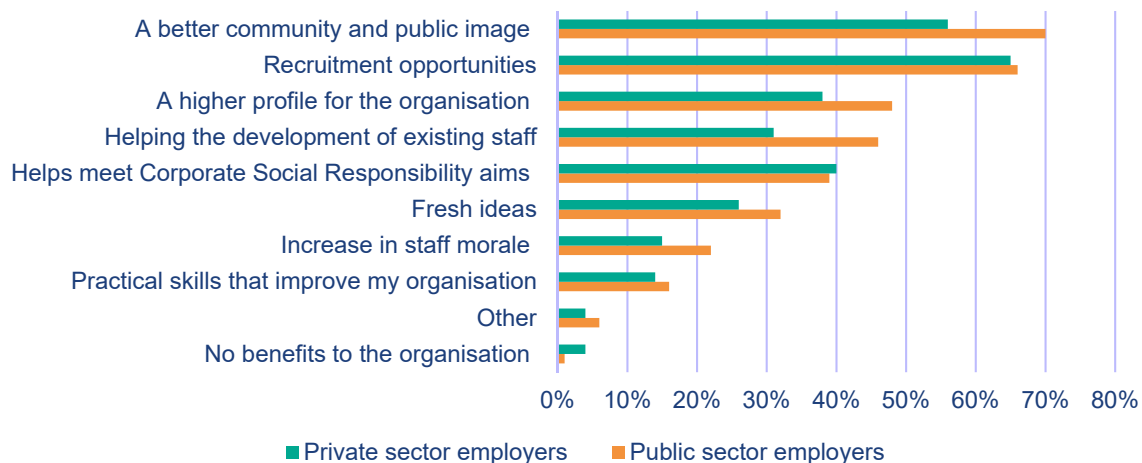
Development Tool 3 – Approaching a new employer

If you have the opportunity to explore a new partnership with an employer, this tool describes the benefits that employers can gain from engaging with schools and with young people.

Tool 3.1 Learn about the benefits for employers and their employees

When employers were asked in a 2009 YouGov survey about what they see as the main benefit of engaging with the education sector, they outlined the following reasons:

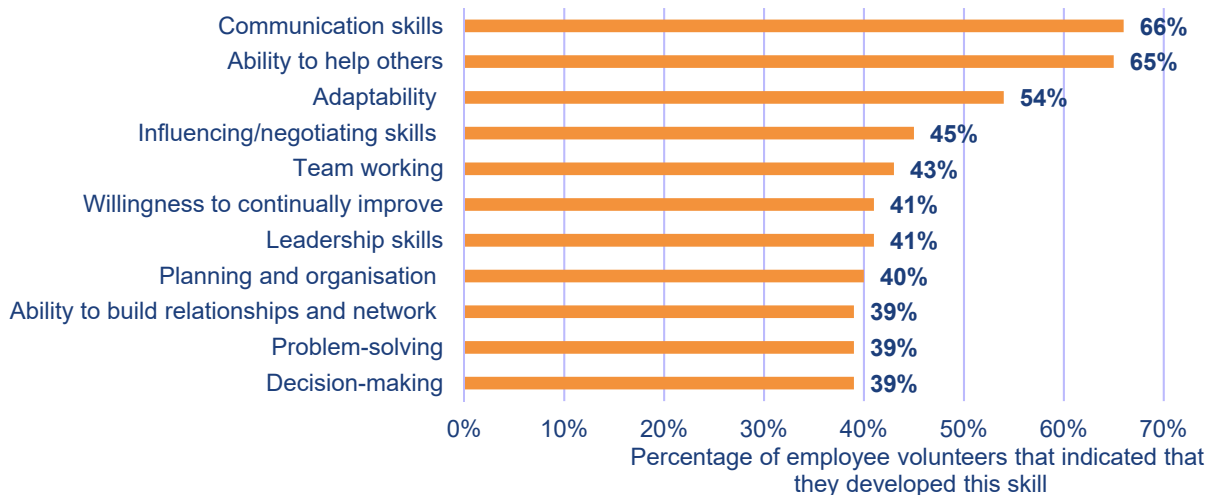
Main benefits for employers



Source: YouGov, 2010, Edge annual programme of stakeholder research: business in schools.

A 2010 survey with 546 volunteers from City of London firms were asked about what skills they develop while supporting students and staff in schools and colleges across the UK:

Main benefits for employees



Source: Wilson, A & Hicks, F, 2010, Volunteering: The Business Case. The Benefits of Corporate Volunteering Programmes in Education. City of London: Corporate Citizenship.

Tool 3.2 What to keep in mind when approaching a new employer

When approaching a new employer, the following are a range of things to keep in mind. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. And remember, [your local DYW group](#) will be able to assist you when approaching a new employer.

Employer name				
Why you have approached them specifically				
The time commitment required of them				
The support they will receive when engaging with your school				
What they will get out of it				

Development Tool 4 – Develop relationship with an existing partner

This tool allows you to reflect on and develop the partnership with a particular employer. You can sit down with an existing partner on an annual basis and go through the following questions.

Would you recommend engagement with our school to other employers? How can we help you do this?			
What skills have you/your staff developed that have helped your business?			
What additional support can our school provide you with?			
Are there particular kinds of engagements you want to focus on and/or develop?			
What aspects of your involvement with our school have gone well and what can be improved?			
Employer name			

Annex – Tools: Blank Copies

Reflection Tool 2 – What my school's current employer engagement offer looks like

Sector	Number/% of businesses in Scotland	Number/% of employees in Scotland	Your current offer		
			Type of activity(eis) offered	Size of business(es)	Year group(s)
A, B, D, E Primary Industries*					
Manufacturing					
Construction					
Wholesale, retail and repairs					
Transport and storage					
Accommodation and food service activities					
Information and communication					
Financial and insurance activities					
Real estate activities					
Professional, scientific and technical activities					
Administrative and support service activities					
Education, human health and social work activities					
Arts, entertainment and recreation					
Other service activities					

Reflection Tool 3 – Identifying development needs

Developmental needs	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority
The need to provide a <i>more complete set of school/employer activities</i>			
The need to ensure that <i>each year group has the range of activities</i> they can benefit from			
The need to offer a more complete set of activities <i>across the range of employment sectors</i>			
The need to <i>extend the size range of the employers</i> we work with			
The need to improve the way we <i>match experiences</i> to stage and the needs of individual young people			

Development Tool 1 – Establishing concrete priorities for development

Activity/Year Group/Employer type	Approach current employer/s about extension of offer	Need to approach new employers	Initial idea about employer could be suitable