



Department  
for Education

# **Employer engagement and capacity to support T Level industry placements**

**Research report**

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**Social Science in Government**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The government's planned reform of technical education and the skills system in England will support young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

After studying core academic subjects until at least 16, young people will be presented with academic or technical opportunities for further education. The two main Level 3 technical options will be either an apprenticeship, or a T Level including an industry placement element. These will prepare individuals for skilled employment by embedding technical knowledge and practical skills valued by industry.

The T Level programme covers 11 technical routes with 27 occupational pathways sitting within these. T Levels will generally be studied over 2 years, and will include a new technical qualification, combined with a substantial industry placement of 45-60 days. Industry placements will enable young people to put into practice and further develop the knowledge, practical skills and behaviours that they have learnt in the classroom.

## Research approach

IFF Research and the Learning and Work Institute were commissioned by the Department for Education to better understand employers' capacity and likelihood to offer T Level industry placements. It also aimed to establish any challenges and barriers that employers may face in offering placements and any additional support that they may require.

A qualitative research approach was used to facilitate a detailed exploration of the key research questions and the views and experiences of a wide variety of employers across different business sizes and sectors. The research involved 120 interviews with employers, and the sample was structured to ensure coverage of all relevant T Level routes and pathways.

Qualitative research aims to provide rich insight into individual perspectives and experiences. Findings from qualitative research should not be taken as representative of all employers.

## Key findings

Understanding what drives existing employer behaviour provides valuable insight into the factors which will influence their future behaviour. To help understand employers' potential motivations to offer new T Level placements, the research first sought to explore the motivations behind employers' provision of existing work-based learning

opportunities, and any barriers or challenges they experience in offering these. In this research, work-based learning is defined as:

- Work experience lasting around one to two weeks with a focus on developing employability skills;
- Work placements lasting longer than two weeks in duration with a focus on developing occupational skills; and
- Apprenticeships, which follow a formal framework or standard and lead to a nationally recognised qualification.

Building upon this, the research then explored reactions to T Level industry placements as a new concept, including employers' capacity and willingness to offer these, and potential barriers and ways to overcome these.

## **Motivations for offering work-based learning**

The rationale given by employers for providing work-based learning opportunities largely fell into two key themes: company benefit and altruism. Company benefits included raising the profile of the business and/or industry, creating a future recruitment pipeline and filling a temporary gap in staffing. Altruistic reasons included: helping young people get onto the career ladder, or a foot in the door; and creating opportunities for the local community.

For shorter, less burdensome work experience opportunities employers could afford to offer these for altruistic reasons. However, when it came to longer work placements and apprenticeships employers were more likely to report being motivated by the expected future benefit to the company, in terms of identifying future staff and training up new workers. This suggests that where greater resources are required to offer work-based learning opportunities, company benefits become more important in determining employer engagement and provision.

## **Challenges to offering work-based learning**

The main challenge employers experienced was the impact of the supervision and training necessary to manage the placement – this was the case across all employers, regardless of whether or not they were offering work-based learning opportunities at the time of the research.

For employers that were already offering work-based learning, this barrier was often expressed as reaching a 'saturation point', where taking on more learners would require a level of staff time beyond that which they could reasonably spare. This could include additional time for the upfront administrative requirements as well as quality checking and oversight to avoid costly mistakes.

Amongst employers that were not offering opportunities (often small establishments) there was a reluctance to divert resources away from employees' usual work in order to train and supervise a young learner. This included a perceived inability to offer any 'meaningful opportunities', i.e. beyond basic or administrative tasks, without diverting significant resources to training and supervision. In some industries, some employers considered that the nature of their work or the working environment made it either inappropriate or legally impossible to support young people.

In the main, employers suggest these challenges and barriers may be addressed through a close relationship with the learning provider (to prepare the learner upfront and support both learner and employer over the duration), as well as greater planning and creativity from employers around the structure and processes to accommodate work-based learners. Where employers had such structures in place, they had been able to minimise the perceived cost or impact on the business and derive greater value or benefit for the company. It was more difficult to address barriers relating to regulation or legislation that prohibited the involvement of young people (usually those under 18) in the workplace.

## **Response to T Levels**

Overall, employers welcomed the idea of T Level industry placements. The length of the placement is viewed as being sufficient to enable the young person to settle in, understand the business and undertake industry-relevant work of value to both employers and learners. A placement of forty-five to sixty days can also provide enough time for the young person to begin to make a positive contribution to the business as an 'extra pair of hands', rather than a burden to be accommodated.

Employers were largely reassured to hear that the industry placement would be focused on an industry relevant to the qualification studied; they felt this would make it more likely that the learner was interested and motivated in their placement. As before, this would increase the likelihood that the learner would bring value to the business.

Closely linked to this point, was a positive response to the idea that learners will have undertaken some preparation and training before starting the placement. The key positive for employers in this respect is that a better prepared and motivated learner will ensure both parties get the most out of the experience.

Employers responded positively to the idea of a named contact at the learning provider. This information addressed some questions that they had around the organisation of the placement, and mechanisms to address any issues experienced with the learner. A named contact was particularly welcomed by employers with less experience of work experience or placements, and by those with any negative previous experiences.

Employers also welcomed flexibility in how they could structure the industry placement to suit their business model, i.e. block, day release or a combination of both.

Once the information outlined above had been discussed, many of the employers indicated that they would be willing to offer industry placements.<sup>1</sup> However, these employers did not feel that they could definitively commit to offering placements until they had received further clarification and information on the following key points:

- Content of the course and the objectives of the placement;
- Structure and timing of the placement;
- The role of the learning provider;
- How T Level qualifications fit with other FE and HE qualifications; and
- Guidelines around paying learners.

However, some employers felt that without this information they could not even state their level of willingness to engage with T Level industry placements.

There was a small group of employers that explicitly stated that they would be *unwilling* to offer T Level industry placements. There were two key reasons for this:

- They could not see the benefit of this type qualification over other qualifications. This tended to be cited by industries with more traditional apprenticeship routes; Agriculture, Environment and Animal care, Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing; and
- They did not believe that they would have the capacity to offer the placements. Employers citing this tended to be small establishments.

## Conclusions

The evidence provided by this research shows that, in general, employers welcome the introduction of T Levels, recognising the value of a stronger technical education route for young people, which includes a meaningful and substantial industry placement. However, the research also clearly identifies a need to further bridge the gap between employers' willingness to engage and their capacity and capability to offer the range and volume of placements that will be required.

Whilst some employers were willing to offer work-based learning opportunities for altruistic reasons, this is limited by the level of burden this places upon the employer. As such, the findings indicate that employers' capacity to offer work-based learning opportunities is a calculation of the expected return (company benefit) over perceived

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<sup>1</sup> Although, it is important to note that employers interviewed for this study already had higher levels of engagement in work-based learning opportunities, than in the general population figures collected in the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) 2016. This potential bias should be considered when interpreting findings.



burden or cost (largely in terms of training and supervision time). Therefore, a critical factor in driving supply of T Level industry placements lies in maximising the perceived benefit (or at least making it more visible), and minimising the perceived cost.

The research suggests that in order to promote engagement and enable employers to make informed decisions about their capacity to engage with T Level industry placements, the following will need be addressed.

Firstly, employers should be given clear information in order to inform their capacity calculations:

- What will be expected of employers?
- What will the financial cost of meeting these expectations be (e.g. staff supervision time, training, legislation and health and safety requirements)?
- What type and level of support (including potential financial support) will be available?

Secondly, the role of the learning provider needs to be clear so that employers understand how it will help to minimise the burden of a placement. Employers were keen for learning providers to support them by: matching young people to an appropriate placement; providing pre-placement preparation and training; and providing ongoing support for both employer and young person. It is crucial that learning providers are appropriately skilled and equipped to fulfil this role in the way that employers expect.

Finally, to develop and implement T Level industry placements, employer- and industry-specific considerations should be taken into account. This includes considering what support is required for employers, particularly for SMEs, where the resource requirement for supervision may be acute. It also includes careful consideration of how to ensure a 'meaningful' placement in those routes, where there are significant barriers to providing opportunities for young people.

Addressing these challenges will help to bridge the gap between employers' willingness to engage in T Levels and their capacity and capability to do so.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Background to the research

In July 2016 the Government outlined its plan to reform technical education and the skills system in England. The Post-16 Skills Plan<sup>2</sup> outlines intentions to develop a framework to help young people and adults into sustainable skilled work. After studying core academic subjects until at least 16, young people will be presented with academic or technical options. The technical option will cover college-based and employment-based (apprenticeship) education to prepare them for skilled employment.

A reformed technical education system will require a strong network of post-16 learning providers, working closely with employers, who will lead on setting standards. There will be a common framework of 15 technical education routes, 11 of which are college-based. Within these 11 college-based routes there are 25 classroom-based T Level pathways which group together occupations with related skills, knowledge and behaviour requirements.

Essential to the delivery of these reforms is the availability of industry placements for 16 to 19-year-old learners on college-based technical routes. These offer the opportunity to gain practical occupational skills and behaviours, which are difficult to learn in education alone. They will be structured and last 45-60 working days. The introduction of this extended placement is a distinct change to the post-16 system and will require higher levels of employer engagement, so that demands for placements can be met.

## Research objectives

This research aimed to better understand employers' capacity and likelihood to offer industry placements. It also aimed to establish any challenges and barriers that employers may face in offering placements and any additional support that they may require. Key objectives of the study were to explore:

- Employers' willingness and ability to offer industry placements of 45-60 working days;
- The motivations and challenges to delivering industry placements, and how challenges can be overcome;
- How employers engage with the skills infrastructure and how useful this is<sup>3</sup>;

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/536043/Post-16\\_Skills\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Due to the length of interviews, time spent exploring current employer engagement with the skills infrastructure was limited in detail.

- Employers' willingness to employ young people with T Levels and how these fit with other qualifications, such as apprenticeships; and
- Whether employers' geographical location affects their ability to offer industry placements.

## Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative approach to enable detailed exploration of: employers' current involvement in and experiences of providing work-based learning opportunities; their perceptions of current barriers to offering placements; and their views on the forthcoming technical education reforms, focusing on the 45-60 day industry placement<sup>4</sup> requirement. IFF Research and the Learning & Work Institute conducted 120 in-depth interviews with employers (82 face-to-face and 38 by telephone). The fieldwork took place between 13 February and 3 May 2018.

The sample was predominantly drawn from re-contact data in the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) 2016. This dataset included information on establishment size and employers' current involvement in providing placements and employing apprentices, which was verified during the screening process. The sample was stratified and selected based on a combination of factors:

- Willingness to be re-contacted for further research;
- An establishment size of two or more employees;
- Likelihood of falling into the specific routes/ pathways, covered by the research (at the sampling stage, this was assigned by proxy, based on the mapping of SIC codes against routes and pathways undertaken during the feasibility study); and
- Clustering by postcode district in selected areas, across all nine English regions.

Additional sample in the selected postcodes and relevant SICs was sourced from Market Location, a commercial business sample source, to ensure that all the 15 technical routes were covered and to supplement the sample of large establishments (with 250+ staff).

All employers received an advance letter informing them about the research, including details of how to opt out of being contacted. Recruitment then took place by telephone using a structured screening questionnaire, which collected information on current involvement in work-based learning opportunities and asked employers to identify the

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<sup>4</sup> Note: Preceding [the government T Levels consultation response](#), "industry placements" were termed "work placements". The term work placement was used in fieldwork.

main occupations in their establishment. This was then used to assign the most relevant T Level route and pathway. This information was verified during the interview and back-coded in a small number of cases.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured discussion guide which helped to ensure consistency while still allowing flexibility for researchers to follow new avenues that arose during the interview. The topic guide took a deliberative approach, in terms of gradually providing employers with additional information about T Level placements, in order to gauge their initial reaction and explore how this developed as researchers provided more detail. This is an excellent way to get beyond instant or socially desirable responses, as well as ensuring that employers who are not currently offering work placements have enough information to make informed judgements.

The guide was designed to capture key influencing factors around whether or not to offer T Level industry placements. It was informed by elements of the COM-B behavioural model<sup>5</sup> to explore:

- Capability: physical capability to offer this type of placement in terms of the nature of the work, supervisory capacity, etc.; psychological capability, such as awareness of potential benefits;
- Motivation: reflective such as whether offering placements fits with the employer's staffing requirements or corporate social responsibility drivers; automatic involving emotions and impulses, such as previous experiences of hosting a placement or even doing one in the past; and
- Opportunity: physical opportunities, dictated by the environment in which decisions are made (e.g. business location or working hours); social opportunities, such as social norms (e.g. is there a strong ethos of engaging with work-based technical education in that sector; do other routes, such as apprenticeships, potentially 'crowd out' opportunities for placements?).

Capability, motivation and opportunity interact to generate behaviour. As shown in this report, it will be important to influence all three of these factors to change employers' behaviour and encourage them to offer T Level industry placements.

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<sup>5</sup> See Michie et al (2011) The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions - <https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>

## **Achieved sample structure**

The interviews were recruited to ensure representation across the following main criteria: T Level route; T Level pathway; whether the employer currently offers work-based learning opportunities; and size of the establishment. In addition, the target sample profile sought to achieve a broad spread of interviews by English region, geography (urban/ rural) and the potential number of routes that could be offered. Whether or not the employer offered apprenticeships was also monitored, although no specific targets were set for this group.

The profile of the achieved interview sample is set out in the tables below.

**Table 1: Route and pathway**

<b>Routes</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Pathway</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
Agricultural, Environmental and Animal Care	8	Animal care and management Agriculture, land management and production	2 6
Business and Administrative	14	Management and administration Human resources	12 2
Catering and Hospitality	11	Hospitality <sup>6</sup> Catering	4 7
Construction	12	Design, surveying and planning Onsite construction Building services engineering	5 2 5
Creative and Design	9	Craft and design Media, broadcast and production Cultural heritage and visitor attractions	4 4 1
Digital	13	IT software and support services Software and applications design and development Data and Digital business services	4 7 2
Education and Childcare	9	Education	9
Engineering and Manufacturing	15	Engineering, design, development and control Engineering, manufacturing and processing Maintenance, installation and repair	5 7 3
Hair and Beauty	5	Hair, beauty and aesthetics	5
Health and Science	12	Health Healthcare science Science	10 1 1
Legal, Accounting and Finance	12	Legal Financial Accounting	4 5 3

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<sup>6</sup> Hospitality is an apprenticeship based pathway within the Catering and Hospitality route

**Table 2: Whether currently offering work-based learning opportunities**

<b>Current engagement in work-based learning opportunities</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
Already engaged/ Already offering	74
Not engaged/ Not currently offering	46

**Table 3: Establishment size**

<b>Size</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
2-24	48
25-49	33
50-249	25
250+	14

Throughout the report we will refer to small, medium or large establishments. Our definition of each of these groups is outlined below:

- Small – the establishment visited/spoke to had between 2 and 49 employees;
- Medium – the establishment visited/spoke to had between 50 and 249 employees;
- Large – the establishment visited/spoke to had 250 or more employees.

## **Interpreting the findings**

Qualitative research aims to provide rich insight into individual views and experiences. Findings from qualitative research do not aim to be generalisable to the wider population. This report should be interpreted in this context and should not be taken as representative of all employers.

## Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter Two examines the approaches that employers currently take to offering work-based learning opportunities, and what motivates them to do so;
- Chapter Three explores the challenges and barriers to offering work based-learning opportunities that employers currently face;
- Chapter Four discusses employer perceptions of the T Level reforms, focusing on the key features of T Level industry placements and employer responses to these; and
- The Conclusions chapter draws out the key findings of the research and their implications for implementing T Levels, with particular focus on engaging employers in delivering the industry placement component.



## Chapter 2: Current approaches to work-based learning opportunities

### Introduction

This chapter examines employers' current work-based learning offer: whether they offer any at all; the types of opportunities on offer and their key characteristics; as well as motivations for offering different forms of work-based learning opportunities.

### Work-based learning opportunities currently being offered

Three types of work-based learning opportunities for young people were explored during the interview: work experience, work placements, and apprenticeships. In our sample, around two-thirds of the employers interviewed were offering at least one of these types, with work placements being the most common. According to the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) 2016, among the general population of employers in England around two-fifths of employers (39%) were offering work placements or apprenticeships.<sup>7</sup> Compared to the EPS data, the interview profile in the current research exhibits higher levels of engagement, as over half of the employers (74 of 120 interviews) were currently offering work-based learning opportunities. This potential bias should be borne in mind when interpreting the research findings.

Different types of work-based learning opportunity involve varying levels of employer engagement, spanning: the amount of advance planning required for the placement; how much active management of the placement is needed (for example, providing training); and commitment to employing the trainee. They range from: ad hoc, informal work experience where the employer was in effect hosting an opportunity for someone to 'shadow' a role for a short period of time; to the necessarily much more formalised approach to apprenticeships, where the duration and content are set out in national standards, and where the placement involves more formalised training.

In the interview, employers were asked to describe the types of work-based learning opportunities that they currently offer. To help distinguish between the different types, employers were provided with a short definition:

- Work experience - defined as lasting around one to two weeks with a focus on developing employability skills;

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<sup>7</sup> Nine per cent of employers in England were offering *both* work placements (defined here as placements for people at school, placements for people at Further Education or sixth form college, or placements for people at university) and apprenticeships, 20% were offering work placements *only*, and 10% were offering apprenticeships *only*. [Employer Perspectives Survey (2016), Department for Education.]

- Work placements - defined as lasting longer than two weeks in duration with a focus on developing occupational skills; and
- Apprenticeships - defined as those which follow a formal framework and lead to a nationally recognised qualification. This definition, also helped to ensure that employers were just talking about these specific types of work-based learning opportunities. All quotes from employers in this chapter will be referring to offering one of the above.

## Work experience

Employers tended to offer work experience to school or college students aged under 18. This type of opportunity largely came about through direct, informal or ad hoc enquiries from students or educational institutions. Alternatively, some employers offer them, again on an ad hoc basis, to family members or friends of current staff. In this sense, employers are generally reactive to offering opportunities of this kind – responding to requests rather than actively seeking work experience students.

*“Usually an individual approaches us, so we get a letter or email from them asking about work experience when they're in Year 11.”*

**Construction, Currently offering, London**

*“The school calls and says they have 1, 2 or 3 students and we are asked if we have space.”*

**Digital, Currently offering, South East**

The main purpose of work experience opportunities is to help students obtain some experience of work for their CV or to help inform their career choices. Tasks typically involve shadowing existing employees and carrying out relatively low key (and low risk) tasks.

*“They're usually doing a bit of sweeping and tidying up. Some help with washing hair but most are too inexperienced – it's harder to wash hair than it looks. If you get a client with a £100 bill and she's soaked, make-up off, it's not easy to explain.”*

**Hair and Beauty, Currently offering, South West**

Employers did not view work experience as a recruitment tool. Motivations for offering work-based learning opportunities are covered later in this chapter, but it is worth noting that the motivations for offering work experience tend towards altruistic reasons, such as wanting to support the local community – a sense of wanting to ‘give something back’ to young people and local schools.

*"It is almost like we are doing something on behalf of the community if you like – us putting something back into the community and doesn't particularly connect us to a wider business strategy."*

#### **Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Currently offering, East of England**

Among the employers interviewed, offering work experience was most common in the Creative and Design route, followed by Education and Childcare, Hair and Beauty, and Engineering and Manufacturing. It was least common in the Digital and Construction routes.

## **Work placements**

Work placements vary in length, but tend to be longer in duration than work experience, typically lasting two to four weeks, but several months in some cases, especially for Further and Higher Education students. Relative to work experience students, the people undertaking work placements tend to be older – around 18 for those in Further Education and 18-24 for those in Higher Education or recent graduates.

Similar to work experience arrangements, work placements tend to be arranged through ad hoc enquiries from students or educational institutions. In this sense, at least when placements are first offered, employers tend to be quite reactive to offering such opportunities. Once an employer has experience of offering work placements, there is usually then a format or recruitment channel in place the next time an opportunity arises and employees may see the benefit of having regular placement students in the workplace.

*"It's a, sort of, first come, first served – we don't contact the colleges. Some days we don't have any placements students with us, but I won't go out and ring the colleges and say we want them, but if they ring us and we can have them we'll say 'yes, and if we're full, then we'll just say 'no'."*

#### **Education and Childcare, Currently offering, North East**

*"You go to departments and talk about placement students and the response is, 'oh, we can't possibly manage that, we're all too busy,' but by the end of the first week with the student they say, 'actually, it was really good having them here.' They end up looking at things a bit differently as a result of having the student here and because, on the whole, they are really engaged young people, who do actually bring something by way of enthusiasm and willingness."*

#### **Creative and Design, Currently offering, East Midlands**

A small number of employers mentioned that they were approached by a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) or Chamber of Commerce to take post-16 work placements. All of this group were already providing some form of work-based learning

opportunity to other students. One employer reported that, despite a LEP approaching them 'all the time' to provide such opportunities, they had to decline, either because of a lack of interest from the proposed student or a lack of resource at the establishment.

Compared with the (lack of) selection criteria attached to recruiting work experience students, employers tend to be more selective in who they take on to a work placement in terms of wanting to take on individuals with an interest in the specific field of work to help ensure the student will be interested and motivated during the course of their placement. The way this is done varies, with most requiring some form of written letter or completed form from the student, outlining: why they want to do the placement; a meeting or form of interview with the employer; or an agreement that the school or college vets the students beforehand. This process aims to ensure that the placement student has sufficient interest and motivation in undertaking the placement in order to make sure that both the student and employer get something meaningful out of it.

*"Placement students have higher supervision requirements [than work experience] and we have less layers of management than we used to have. Therefore, they have to have something meaningful to do, and are not just shadowing people and following them around. The key factor is that they have a genuine interest in that area of the business."*

**Digital, Currently offering, London**

*"We select people, who actually want to do the work. We used to be more relaxed, but this year we're being more focussed. We want those who want to be doing some kind of media or digital content, coding etc. They are not getting paid, but it takes resource with staff time."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, South West**

Moreover, the nature of work placements tends to be more formal and structured than work experience. It might comprise planned rotations around different departments, areas of the business, or through the sorts of tasks which are set aside for placements students to do. This more structured approach aims to achieve some form of output or benefit to the employer, as well as offering the student some meaningful experience so that they can sustain their motivation throughout.

*"We don't take someone on just to make cups of tea and do a bit of filing. There has to be a bit more to it."*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, West Midlands**

*"We insist on a planning document being completed, which sets out the responsibilities and activities that will be involved in the placement. It gives the student some reassurance that a plan is in place for them."*

**Digital, Currently offering, London**

The outcomes of such placements varied. Generally, work placements are used more as a recruitment tool than work experience, acting as a form of trial period, or with placement students applying for a job at the employer once they had completed their studies.

*“We see the value both to us as a business in terms of potentially identifying suitable candidates if they excel, but also we see the value for those individuals in relation to them assessing what their chosen career might be. Sometimes, it makes them realise that it is not what they want to do, yet it still gives those individuals the exposure to a realistic work environment.”*

#### **Education and Childcare, Currently offering, Yorkshire and Humberside**

Among the employers interviewed, work placements are commonly offered in the Education and Childcare, Health and Science, and Creative and Design routes. They were least common among employers in the Construction route, which supports data reported in the Employer Perspectives Survey (2016), where only a fifth of employers in the construction sector (22%) offered work placements, compared with an average of two-fifths (38%) across all employers in England.

## **Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships can take 1-5 years to complete depending on the level, with employers in this research reporting that their apprenticeships typically last around two years. In England, the age profile for apprenticeship starts is 25% 16 to 18-year olds, 29% 19 to 24-year olds and 47% aged over 25.<sup>8</sup> In this research, employers mainly employed apprentices aged between 18 and 25.<sup>9</sup>

An apprenticeship is a job with training, and as such, recruitment is more formal process than for work experience and work placement students, with employers establishing formal links with colleges and other learning providers, coupled with the use of advertisements and formal interviewing processes.

*“We might get eight that apply and come in for interview. We will do a first round of interviews and if there are two that look alright, quite often we will take the two and then invite three or four back for a second interview. We make a decision based on their qualifications and the way they come across – the way they talk to you, answer questions and their general demeanour.”*

#### **Business and Administration, Currently offering, East Midlands**

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<sup>8</sup> DfE (2018) Apprenticeship Starts: provisional data 2016/17

<sup>9</sup> This aligns the Employer Perspectives Survey (2016), where around nine-in-ten (93%) employers offering apprenticeships in England offered them to individuals under 25 years of age (47% offered them exclusively to young people), compared with just under half (48%) offering apprenticeships to individuals aged 25+ (only 2% offering them exclusively to those aged 25+).

*"We screen their CVs to see if they are anticipated to get their grades and will then have a telephone interview, during which we will ask them basic things, before bringing them in for a face-to-face interview and an on-the-job experience where we will pair them with what we call a master technician for a couple of hours and just see how engaged they are."*

#### **Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, South West**

The increased emphasis on screening candidates for apprenticeships – relative to the screening applied to the recruitment of work experience and work placement students – likely reflects the financial outlay, associated with recruiting an apprentice, and duration of the apprenticeship with associated investment in staff time for mentoring and supervising. To this end, apprenticeships are often used as a recruitment tool by employers in the hope that the individual stays on after completing their apprenticeship.

*"One of the main reasons we support apprenticeships is it does bring new blood into the business."*

#### **Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

Among the employers interviewed, engagement with apprenticeships was most established in the Construction route, followed by Education and Childcare, Business and Administration, and Health and Science.

By size, large establishments tended to be more likely to offer any and each type of work-based learning opportunity discussed above. The influence of size has previously been reported<sup>10</sup> and likely reflects: the relative resource capabilities of employers of different sizes; the relative chance of employees exploring the possibility of family connections or friends to undertake a work experience or placement; as well as the number of different departments or occupations, which could accommodate a work experience/placement student or apprentice. These link to the capability (i.e. supervisory capacity and awareness of potential benefit) and opportunity (i.e. physical opportunities dictated by the working environment and social norms) components of the COM-B behavioural model.

Most of the employers offering work-based learning opportunities were offering more than one type (i.e. work experience opportunities as well as work placements); or work experience/placements alongside apprenticeships. It appears that once the internal norms or processes are established as well as links with local educational institutions, it becomes 'easier' for employers to expand their work-based learning offer.

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<sup>10</sup> DfE (2016), Employer Perspectives Survey

## Motivations for offering work-based learning opportunities

Understanding what drives existing behaviour will likely provide insight into the factors which will influence future behaviour. To help understand potential motivations for employer engagement with T Level placements, it is therefore useful to understand the motivations behind what employers currently provide.

The types of reasons provided by employers largely fell into two main groupings: company benefit and altruism. Most employers cited reasons related to both, although company benefit was usually the primary reason with the greatest influence on actual behaviour. Further to company benefit and altruism, there were some personal motivations, such as key decision makers in the business having benefitted from undertaking a placement or apprenticeship in their early career and wanting to extend such opportunities to others. These motivations are discussed in turn below.

### Company benefit

Factors associated with the 'company benefit' rationale are diverse but their common theme is that the employer seeks to extract some value from offering such opportunities. Motivations pertaining to company benefit were most evident among employers offering apprenticeships and work placements, rather than work experience.

Some such reasons are strategic. For instance, a common 'company benefit' motivation was using work-based learning opportunities to help strengthen recruitment pipelines. This reflects employers looking to use work-based learning opportunities – particularly apprenticeships, but also, to some extent, work placements – as a way to bring someone in and train them up to become a valued member of staff or using a placement as a form of trial period.

*"We view it as a good way to recruit in the next generation because most of us started off young in the trade. It's a good way to capture somebody early."*

#### Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, East Midlands

*"Apprenticeships and internships are something that we look at a bit more strategically [compared with work experience], as they are more closely aligned to core business development aims. If we're going to put the energy into it, it has to somehow be transactional in terms of knowledge or capacity building."*

#### Creative and Design, Currently offering, North East

*"Apprentices are a really good way for organisations to grow. If you're taking on an experienced member of staff and paying a full-time wage, you need to grow customers and accrue business to sustain them in the long term. Whereas, an apprentice is on a lower wage and they can provide a valuable role and help grow the business. By the time they are at the end of their apprenticeship, you hope to*



*have grown sufficiently to be able to keep them and you will need them as they are doing something that has a value. It's a good way to discover talented people."*

**Digital, Currently offering, South East**

Similarly, another benefit for offering such opportunities is to raise the profile of the company and/or industry among potential recruits, which helps to address current or future skills gaps. Consideration to attracting the next generation of workers and ensuring a future pipeline of talent, was most evident among employers in the Creative and Design, Childcare and Education, Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, and Health and Science routes. This tended to reflect concerns about the necessity of attracting skilled workers in the future, where there is perceived to be a current or anticipated shortfall of skilled labour, interested in the line of work.

*"We're, kind of, on a mission to promote the fact that businesses can design and manufacture in the UK. [A steady supply of] trained labour is now coming to an end, so we're having to actually train people ourselves. We're on a mission to tell people that textiles is alive and well, that there's a very wide range of rewarding careers that you can have in sewing and garments within fashion."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*"We need more carers, we need more people who understand the nature of care."*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, South East**

There were other company benefits to offering work-based learning opportunities, which are more opportunistic than strategic. For instance, for some employers, work placements were serving the function to help decrease workloads of existing staff during busy periods (such as seasonal work) and help fill temporary gaps in staffing, whilst being inexpensive relative to hiring agency workers.

*"The students help us out when we need temporary staff to get us over a project period and it tends to be that they will come back every year and sometimes they come back to us for a job after university."*

**Legal, Accounting and Finance, Currently offering, North West**

However, some employers mentioned that it depends on the quality of the individual doing the placement as to whether they help to reduce workloads, as the need for supervision may place additional demands on existing staff.

*"It depends on the individual. You sometimes get very good students, who are very useful and helpful. Other times, you get people that need a lot of help, which then actually causes problems."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, East Midlands**



Whilst less common, some clients ask if one of their family members can gain some work experience. When employers can accommodate such requests, this benefits the company as their relationship with certain clients improves.

Employers offering work-based learning opportunities were also able to extract company benefit by using the opportunity of having an apprentice or work placement/experience student to develop the coaching and mentoring skills of existing employees.

*"Thinking about my own team, there are some mid-career and looking for line management experience which is something that a lot of them have talked about in their appraisals. Being able to support a creative apprentice is something which helps us provide those opportunities."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, North East**

## **Altruistic reasons**

Whilst reasons pertaining to company benefit were usually the primary motivation for offering work-based learning opportunities (especially apprenticeships and work placements), there was nevertheless a strong altruistic component contributing to the motivations behind offering such opportunities. An altruistic element to offering work placements has previously been reported in the Employer Perspectives Survey (2016), where two-thirds (68%) of employers in England, offering work placements, cited at least one altruistic reason for offering them.

In the current research, the most common altruistic motivation was a desire to give young people work experience to help them get on the career ladder or help inform their career choices. This motivation was common across various employers, irrespective of establishment size or route. As highlighted in the quotes below, there was a sense of it feeling like 'the right thing to do'.

*"If nobody gives a fifteen-year-old a chance, then how can they ever get the experience to move on, so the school philosophy is basically giving them a chance and doing what we can."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*"As part of its value set, the company definitely has something about supporting and nurturing and trying to help people. We have opportunities for young people, and we feel, as an organisation, it's our responsibility to offer young people every opportunity that they can have."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, North East**

*"It's easier for people, who have well educated parents, to be motivated to get good jobs, to get the openings... Whereas, the general public can't do that so they're already at a disadvantage and we want to help open the playing fields."*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, North West**

Linked to this, another common altruistic motivation among employers was the desire to support the local community by offering work-based learning opportunities, with a sense of 'doing their bit' for the community and young people being part of the ethos of their organisation. An example from the current research is a large establishment in a rural area which felt they have an obligation to provide work placements when asked by local schools, as they are the largest employer in that area; if they did not offer them, then it is unlikely the student could find other viable alternatives.

*"We want to put something back into the local region to try and get new architects and get school children, who are interested in design and architecture, to come into our business."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, North West**

*"The Director is a local and likes to support the local community."*

**Construction, Currently offering, London**

Underpinning the reasons outlined above, particularly for larger establishments, was a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, which employers also mentioned as a motivating factor behind engaging with work-based learning opportunities. The influence of a CSR policy in offering work-based learning opportunities was particularly common among employers in the Health and Science, Business and Administration, and Construction routes. This may reflect the nature of businesses in Health and Science, where many are providing a public service, as well as the relative size of businesses in this and the Business and Administration route. For employers in the Construction route, it may also reflect demands placed on them to offer apprenticeships as part of fulfilling contracts, particularly publicly commissioned construction projects.

## **Personal reasons**

Alongside company benefit and altruism, for some employers, a key motivating factor stemmed from their own personal experiences or the experiences of family members. Where senior personnel had benefitted from undertaking a work placement or apprenticeship early in their career, they felt a desire to extend such opportunities to others.

*"When I was their age, I didn't know what I wanted to do and my work experience was in a nursery and I loved it. I want others to have a similar experience."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, South East**

Similarly, some considered their own families and the expectation that one day their children might be seeking an opportunity to undertake work experience, declaring it would be hypocritical, therefore, not to currently offer such opportunities to others.

*“It's nice to be asked, I'm happy to help. I hope that somebody would do the same for my children.”*

#### **Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, West Midlands**

Motivations for offering work-based learning opportunities did not differ greatly by size; both small and large establishments cite a mix of company benefits and altruistic reasons for offering work-based learning opportunities. However, in weighing up the apparent primary reason(s) for offering such opportunities, small establishments were more likely to cite company benefit. This perhaps reflects a relative lack of resource and capacity to spare for the administrative and mentoring/supervisory tasks, associated with offering work-based learning opportunities. Thus, a clear company benefit to offering them is needed.

Motivations for offering work-based learning opportunities differed according to the specific type of opportunity. For instance, motivations for offering work experience tended to lean towards altruistic motivations (i.e. part of CSR policy, or a sense of wanting to give young people an opportunity), as employers tend not to expect much output from the individual(s) undertaking the work experience. In contrast, motivations for offering apprenticeships focus more on eliciting company benefits. Apprenticeships are mainly seen as a way to bring new (young) talent into the business.

Motivations for offering work placements tend to sit somewhere between the two. If the placement is of a longer duration than a couple of weeks (with an associated requirement for supervision and training resource), there tends to be greater emphasis on wanting to see company benefits. Nevertheless, altruistic reasons still form a strong component of the motivations behind offering work placements.

# Chapter 3: Challenges to offering work-based learning opportunities

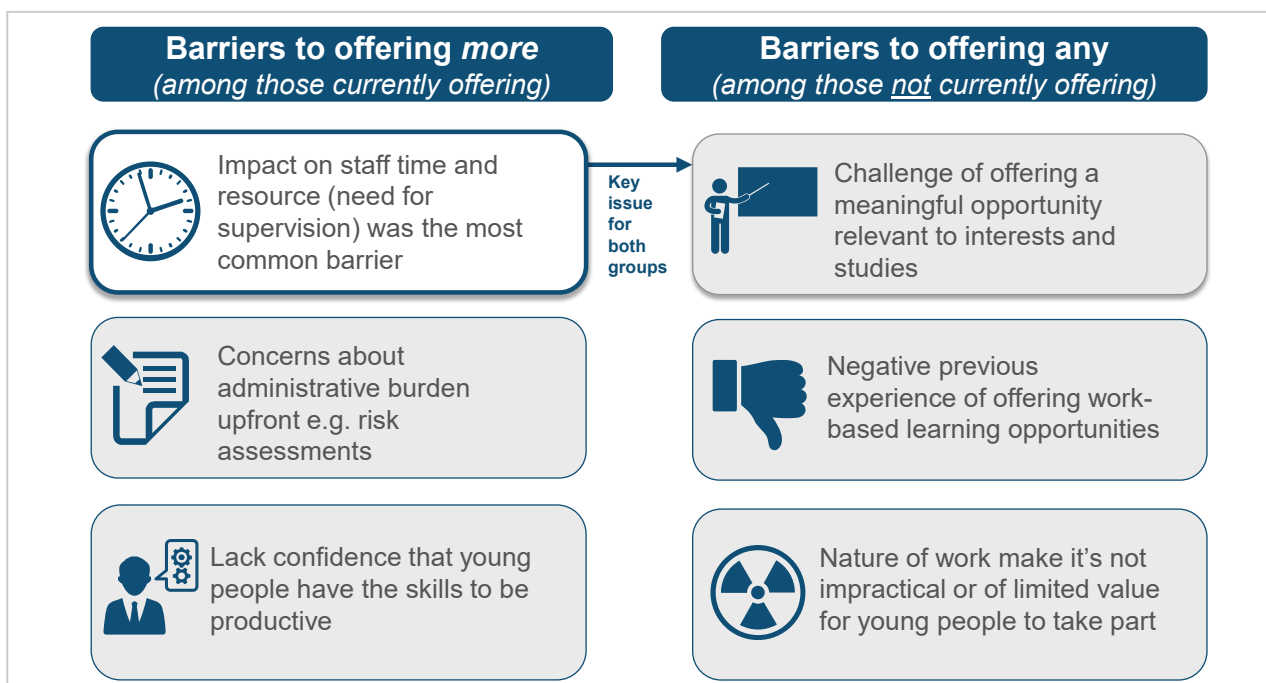
## Introduction

This chapter addresses the challenges and barriers to offering work based-learning opportunities that employers currently face. At this point in the discussion, employers were not referring to specific barriers to T Level placements, but general barriers to offering any work-based learning opportunity. This is followed by a discussion of the potential solutions to barriers, as suggested by employers. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the extent to which the barriers can be overcome by the proposed solutions and what else may be done to address them.

## Barriers and challenges

This section begins with a discussion of the barriers that prevent employers who are currently offering work-based learning opportunities from offering *more* and moves on to barriers that prevent employers from offering *any* work-based learning opportunities currently. The barriers and challenges in each section are ordered by prevalence, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Key barriers and challenges to work-based learning



## Impact on staff time and resource

The impact of training and supervising a work-based learner on staff time and resource was by far the main reported barrier to both offering *any* and offering *more* opportunities, as reported by many employers of all establishment sizes. The main concern for both groups of employers was that the time to train and supervise learners had a detrimental impact on their staffs' productivity.

For those currently offering work-based learning opportunities, this barrier was often expressed as reaching a saturation point, where taking on more learners would require a level of staff time, above that which they could reasonably spare.

*"There aren't enough people that have the time to devote to mentoring. When it's busy, it can be stressful for those that have to get their work out but then also have to supervise someone who's not up to speed. You have to spend the time with somebody otherwise it's not fair to have embarked on the programme."*

### Creative and Design, Currently offering, East Midlands

For employers not currently offering any such opportunities, there was a reluctance to divert resources away from employees' usual work, to train and supervise a young learner. Whilst this barrier was stressed strongly across all employers, regardless of establishment size, it was common for small establishments to talk about this in the context of busy staff workloads and resourcing issues.

*"It really does begin and end with resources... It's not the financial cost, but the fact staff would have to be removed from their daily roles to look after the student... Unfortunately, we don't have the capacity from a time point-of-view, or a staff point-of-view, just to be able to give that very beneficial experience."*

### Engineering and Manufacturing, Not currently offering, South East

The impact on time and resource is linked to the capability element of the COM-B behavioural model; the ability to offer (more) placements is precluded by employers' lack of perceived capacity to spare more staff time to train and supervise work-based learners.

It is important to note that the employers, currently offering work-based learning, tend to be larger and more likely to be within Health and Science and Education and Childcare routes. These large establishments reported a lack of time amongst senior and highly skilled staff, such as managers and line managers, as a barrier to offering more work-based learning opportunities. Employers that were not currently offering tended to be small establishments. It was more common for this group to talk about how it was their own time that would have to be spent training and supervising, as they often fulfilled various roles across the business.

An additional industry effect was reported by employers in the Engineering and Manufacturing and Creative and Design routes. Employers in these routes often carried out jobs that required a high level of technical skill in order to perform core tasks, or were potentially dangerous for inexperienced learners to perform. This meant a need for more intensive supervision, which limited their capacity to provide additional opportunities.

*"When you're doing a fundamentally dangerous job... the supervision burden is massive and the risk burden is massive, and I don't see any way around that."*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*"The biggest one as far as apprenticeships for frontline staff are concerned... is the fact that the person has to be shadowed and mentored throughout their entire apprenticeship which essentially doubles cost."*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, West Midlands**

While most employers talked about the impact of training and supervision in broad terms of time lost, a minority did make direct reference to the financial implications. Almost all were concerned with the financial loss incurred due to employees giving up their working time, resulting in lost productivity and therefore lost revenue. Even where it was not explicitly stated, it is likely that when employers mention lost staff time, they are also (subconsciously) considering the subsequent financial implications.

*"If I'm taking someone who does not have much experience, either me or my staff has to spend some time ... means they are not doing their work so it's a loss of funds at some point."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

*"There are financial barriers due to the potential loss of productivity - they have to release games every 2-3 weeks and KPIs to meet. Placements could cause a drag on productivity by taking coders/engineers away from the work they should be producing."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

Other financial costs were a much less frequent consideration. A few employers mentioned the increased insurance costs of having a young person in the workplace and the increased waged bill from having to pay an extra person. The cost of extra equipment was also mentioned.

## **Concerns about the upfront administrative burden**

Specifically, amongst some employers already offering work-based learning, there was an awareness of the administration required to set up a placement and, therefore, the potential burden of offering additional opportunities. This was more commonly expressed by small and medium size establishments. Examples of this administration included

mandatory induction training, systems set up, risk assessments and other legal and regulatory requirements (discussed further below). The burden can either be off-putting for the employer or act as a demotivating factor to offering at all.

*“For under 18s, we have to write a separate young person’s risk assessment and it makes more work for us.”*

**Business and Administration, Currently offering, East Midlands**

## **Lack of confidence in the skills / productivity of young people**

A further challenge of offering more placements to young people was a concern that young people would not have the skills to be productive and would be more of a cost than a benefit to the business. This was reported by a small number of employers. Again, for young people to be productive, training and supervision was required and, for larger numbers, the ability to provide this kind of support becomes more difficult and impacts on quality.

*“If it’s just one student, you can give him individual attention and you can organise something and discipline isn’t an issue, whereas the bigger the group becomes, the harder it becomes to manage and it almost starts to feel more like a lesson, like you’re in a college or something. I don’t think that works terribly well.”*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, East Midlands**

There was an associated concern amongst a few employers based on prior experience that, unless appropriate training was given, mistakes could be made at a cost to the business. For these employers, the potential risks of offering more placements outweighed the perceived company benefits.

*“We cannot afford to have somebody make a mistake with one of our clients and give the excuse they are only with us for two weeks.”*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, West Midlands**

## **Challenging to offer meaningful work**

As discussed, the impact of training and supervision was a key issue across both employers currently offering work-based learning and those that are not. Linked to this, some, employers (usually small establishments) that were not currently offering work-based learning opportunities reported that, to be able to offer learners anything beyond menial tasks, it would take a level of training and supervision above what they could / would be willing to offer.

*“A business of this size doesn’t lend itself to having [young people] because of their lack of experience. They have no idea how to file paperwork, do accounts, even the basic stuff isn’t there. And when you’re only working 2.5 days a week and half your*



*time is taken up showing them the basics rather than showing the job, so to speak, it would become impossible to do your own work."*

#### **Agriculture, Environment and Animal care, Not currently offering, East of England**

Most employers who raised this as a barrier were reluctant to spare staff resource to train young learners to the requisite level. For example, one employer in the Craft and Design pathway mentioned that, in order to do anything useful, they would have to undergo training in how to use a lathe or they'd be at risk of harming themselves.

However, the key point about this group is that there was also a reluctance to give work-based learners basic tasks, with a general acknowledgement that this was of little benefit to the employer or the learner. As such, they would prefer not to offer placements or work experience at all, rather than provide a poor-quality experience for the learner.

*"They have to have something meaningful to do, and are not just shadowing people and following them around."*

#### **Digital, Currently offering, East of England**

A further challenge, mentioned by a few of the employers, was that their working hours limited their ability to offer any useful opportunities. For most of these, whose main business took place in evenings or weekends, there were concerns that the learner could not work outside 'college' hours, meaning either the employer could not offer them work, or the work that they could offer during the daytime was of little use to both the learner and the employer. This was mentioned by employers in the Creative and Design and Catering and Hospitality route.

*"I think that time constraint of, if it's meant to be within school time. I think, then, they are going to miss out a lot, in this particular industry, and also the catering industry."*

#### **Catering and Hospitality, Not currently offering, East of England**

### **Negative previous experience**

For some employers not currently offering, previous experience of hosting work-based learners had given them a negative impression of young people. Negative experiences were a demotivating influence on employers' willingness to take on more work-based learners, either in the future or currently.

Most of these employers had found that work-based learners in the past had a bad attitude towards work, including: laziness, poor time-keeping, constant complaining, a lack of motivation and lacking the skills to carry out basic tasks. In these cases, employers often had difficulties engaging the learner, who would either become a burden to the employer or the placement would be cut short.



Employers, who had negative previous experiences, generally felt that they were receiving learners, who did not want to be there. Some mentioned that there was not enough care from the school or learning provider when matching the learner to an employer. One employer, who currently offers work-based learning opportunities, said that if they were to take on another apprentice in the future, they would no longer use a private learning provider, but rather go through the local authority, who interview the prospective apprentices and give the employer choice about who to take on.

*"We had one apprentice who we ended up dismissing her two months later for gross misconduct. We obviously had a bad experience with it... It was a nightmare from start to finish... It could've just been her, and it probably was, but it became a lot of hard work for me so, we just said 'No more'."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, North East**

## **Nature of work makes it impractical for young people**

Finally, the nature of some employers' work was not conducive to hosting work-based learners and this acted as a barrier to offering *any* work-based learning opportunities.

This barrier has two main elements to it, the first of which may be easier to address than the second:

- Perceived barriers around the 'appropriateness' of the type of work for young people;
- Legal and regulatory barriers that actively prohibit the presence of young people in the workplace.

This barrier was more prevalent for employers not currently offering work-based learning, although it did also mean that it limited the number of placements that those who were engaged could offer.

## **Workplace is inappropriate for young people**

For a variety of reasons, some employers reported the type of work or the workplace environment was not appropriate for young people. In some cases, this appeared to relate to a reluctance on the part of the employer to consider how the work could be adapted to make it more suitable. In behavioural terms, this reflects both the employers' capability (whether they can spare the resource to make adaptations) and motivation (whether they think the extra effort is worthwhile) to offer work-based learning opportunities.

Within the Health and Science and Education and Childcare routes in particular, there were a number of perceived challenges to young people's participation including: hospitals and care homes being inappropriate environments because of the things they might see and experience (Health and Science); being in contact with young and

vulnerable people where the learner's presence could be disruptive (Health and Science, Education and Childcare); and dealing with sensitive and confidential information (Health and Science, Education and Childcare).

*"A placement could be too disruptive for some clients here, many have autism and need strict routine, a two-week placement doesn't suit this side of the business."*

**Health and Science, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*"As we [the company] are dealing with exam papers they [the learner] need to be able to work in an environment where they're not coming into contact with this information."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, North East**

Other routes that experienced this barrier (in a slightly different way) were those that required a lot of physical, tiring work, operating machinery or working with animals (i.e. Construction and Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care). Employers felt young people were either incapable of undertaking this work or did not feel comfortable asking them to perform tasks.

*"It's heavy graft and they are out in all weathers from 7am to 5pm. It's a long hard day even if you have the physical build and strength to do the job, let alone for youngsters who can't cope with it."*

**Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Not currently offering, East of England**

Employers' location and the logistics of accessing sites was also mentioned by a few employers. Most of these employers were based in rural locations which were hard to access via public transport, such as on a farm (Agricultural, Environmental and Animal Care) or a country pub (Catering and Hospitality). Although access to a car and the ability to drive was an obvious solution, there was a general assumption amongst employers that work-based learners would not be able to drive because of their age and would be reliant on public transport or parents.

*"It's difficult to get here if you don't drive. If you lived in the local village, maybe you could get a bus to the start of the drive and walk the rest of the way... In this area, getting to anything that's not on a bus route becomes a big problem if you can't drive."*

**Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Not currently offering, East of England**

*"They can't get here, literally...there's no buses really and they're reliant on parents, providing the parents don't work."*

**Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, West Midlands**

## Legal and regulatory requirements

There were also a limited number of examples where legal and regulatory requirements prohibited the extent to which employers could have young people in the workplace. Within the COM-B behavioural model, this barrier relates to employers not having the ‘opportunity’ to take on young learners; whilst they may have the capability in terms of resource and be willing to do so, their physical working environment makes it infeasible.

In some cases, employers reported age restrictions meant that there were environments and tasks that were prohibited. This was raised by employers in the Construction and Health and Science route, where certain areas of hospitals, such as the X-ray room, or care homes were considered off limits. In some cases, under-18’s were not allowed into these environments, whereas in others, training, certificates and/or qualifications were required.

Secondly, there were occupations where legal requirements meant under-18s had to be under constant supervision, which, as discussed previously, was often not possible. This was raised as a barrier by an employer in the Engineering and Manufacturing route.

*“We have to drive them to [training site] and they have to do a fast track course and that takes someone’s time, usually mine, to go down there and get the tests done ... [otherwise] they wouldn’t get on site [for] six to eight weeks.”*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

In addition to age restrictions, some occupations had to adhere to regulations, meaning without certain certificates or qualifications the learner would not be allowed access to the workplace. In the Construction route, for example, a few mentioned the need to have a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) certificate, including the time taken to get one, as a barrier. A few in the Engineering and Manufacturing route also noted the need to have specific professional memberships.

*“To do a lot of the work you need to be a member of the Institute of Acoustics or some kind of member and they have got quite high boundaries for really basic positions ... you need a degree in acoustics... the professional body is basically creating a blockage to bringing in new people at a low level.”*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, South West**

## Potential Solutions

Employers were also asked about how they had overcome barriers to offering work-based learning opportunities currently and, if they had not been overcome, how they envisaged they might be. These solutions fell into three categories: support from learning providers; developing employers’ own internal structures; and financial support.

This section also discusses the extent to which these potential solutions are able to address the barriers and challenges discussed above. This is illustrated visually in Figure 3.2. Lighter grey ticks indicate that the solution may contribute to overcoming a barrier but would not be expected to fully resolve the issue.

**Figure 3.2: Extent to which solutions can address barriers**

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Learning Provider Support</b>	<b>Employer Structures</b>	<b>Financial Support</b>
Impact on staff time and resource	✓	✓	✓
Concerns about the administrative burden upfront	✓	✓	
Lack of confidence that young people have the skills to be productive	✓		
Challenging to offer meaningful work	✓	✓	✓
Negative previous experience of offering work-based learning	✓		
Inappropriate type of work / workplace environment	✓	✓	
Prohibitive legislation / regulatory requirements			

## Support from learning providers

The most common solution suggested by employers was increased support from learning providers. The support envisaged by employers was mainly up-front, before the placement starts, such as helping to ensure the right candidates are placed, ensuring employers have sufficient knowledge, and making sure they are fully prepared and have structured their placement. There was also a desire for close communication during the placement to ensure the arrangement is working for the employer and student.

## Structuring the placement

Devising a meaningful work placement, often with little knowledge of the learner’s needs and study focus, was seen as a burden for many employers. Some could not spare the resource required for this task, while others were unsure how they would go about it. Employers wanted more information from learning providers on teaching requirements and what skills the students were interested in learning. This information would help to plan roles and tasks the learner could undertake, the departments they would sit in and how their time would be arranged. Small establishments who were not currently offering placements were the most likely to want this kind of support.

Having a more structured placement would address a number of barriers. The impact on employer time and resources would likely be reduced as the learning provider would assist with structuring the placement; and having a clearly planned role for the learner would make it more likely they given meaningful tasks to perform.

### **Identifying suitable candidates**

There was an appetite for closer collaboration with the learning provider when it came to identifying the right person for the role, largely due to negative previous experiences with poorly matched learners. To support selection, employers also wanted more information about the student, including their discipline and time keeping record. A few employers drew comparisons with the interview process for apprentices, where the learning provider put forward a few candidates and the employer would choose their preferred applicant.

*“The college would need to provide a lot of information about the background of the student, whether they are motivated to work and learn, the qualification they are studying for and their career aspirations.”*

**Business and Administration, Not currently offering, East Midlands**

A process to better match candidates to employer, as opposed to ad-hoc requests, would help to reassure employers with previous negative experiences, as well as helping the perceived burden of training and supervising unsuitable learners.

*“It’s good for them [the learner] to go through an interview process and we need to be sure that we have the right candidate who best fits the organisation.”*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

### **Preparation**

Ensuring the learner and the employer were adequately prepared for a placement was important. Employers were often keen that they had all the information they needed from the learning provider at the start of the process to ensure the placement went smoothly.

The main things that employers wanted information on were: what costs would be incurred and who should absorb these; disciplinary processes; what equipment the learner would have; and exit plans. The provision of this information would save employers’ the time searching for it themselves, reducing the upfront administrative burden and therefore reducing the impact on staff time and resource.

*“It would be nice to know if we’re expected to provide all their equipment or whether they come with it. Either way it can be worked out from the start. All you need to know are all the ins and outs from the beginning”.*

**Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, South West**

It was important for some employers that the learner was equipped with at least the core skills they would need to perform their role at the business; this was mentioned by employers who currently take on apprentices or post-16 work placements. One said they would be keen for the student to already have started a relevant qualification by the time the placement took place. This would mean the time spent training and supervising would be reduced and the student would be able to perform more meaningful tasks than they would with no prior experience.

*"We'd like somebody who's got a little bit of a grounding, maybe somebody who's already started on the programme at the college. Just because we're limited with numbers of people that we have available to be able to mentor and that's the difficulty".*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

Preparing learners for the workplace could minimise the need for training from the employer to enable the learner to perform meaningful and not menial tasks.

### **Ongoing support**

In terms of ongoing support, a process of monitoring the progress of the learner was considered important in ensuring the objectives of the placement were being met and the experience was proving beneficial.

*"Somebody coming in once a month or two for feedback on placement person - how they are behaving and performing."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

### **Developing employers' own internal structures**

There was an awareness amongst some employers of the need to develop internal ways to accommodate work-based learners. Some employers, who were already offering opportunities, had overcome capability-related barriers by doing this.

To enable work-based learning opportunities, employers would need to change the way internal resources are managed. This would require careful planning around busy individual and departmental workloads to ease the burden on staff resource, to ensure time was allocated for training and supervision and that the right staff members were available to provide support. Some mentioned timing opportunities to coincide with relevant projects so that there was work at the appropriate level for the learner.

*"We are very careful about which sites we will place students at. If a site is too busy, it can be a hindrance to existing staff to have a student there and the student will not necessarily get a positive experience."*

**Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*“I think we would have to develop a plan internally to allow for that flexibility of goals and that flexibility of usage of time and that would be a fairly big project, but not an impossible one, it would involve the broader HR team.”*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

For a few employers in the following routes: Engineering and Manufacturing; Legal, Accounting and Finance; and Digital, a prerequisite to offering opportunities was achieving ‘buy in’ from a higher level.

Providing employers with best practice on how to maximise the company benefit and minimise the burden is likely to help them to reduce the impact of training and supervision. Additionally, having an established process can help to mitigate upfront administrative resource. Interviews suggest that small establishments would benefit the most from this. Additionally, better planning for placements internally can allow for more time to be dedicated to the young learner, as some employers testified.

Employers may need to think creatively about how to address some of their perceived challenges around offering ‘meaningful’ opportunities and what constitutes an inappropriate environment for a young person. Greater planning could identify suitable roles that require a lower level of training or technical skill, but still provide useful experience for the learner. This is likely to involve a change of mindset and willingness on the part of the employer to dedicate resources to different ways of working, with support from learning providers being critical here.

## **Financial support**

A small number of employers said that financial support could be a solution to the key barrier of staff time ‘lost’ through training and supervising learners. The assumption would be that financial support would compensate for costs associated with lower productivity of supervisory staff members, although a couple of small establishments mentioned that this money would be used to acquire additional staff to make up for lost capacity.

Financial support was mentioned both by those currently offering and not currently offering and across small and medium sized establishments. It was most common in the Digital route, although it was also mentioned by a handful of employers in the following routes: Creative and Design, Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care; Health and Science; and Legal, Finance and Accounting.

*“There could be a financial incentive for farms and a sharing of responsibility with the college - having an apprentice on the farm is quite cheap but in terms of productivity compared to a fully trained person, they are nowhere near.”*

**Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Not currently offering, South East**



Employers, who mentioned this as a solution, felt that this would shift the cost benefit ratio in favour of it being a benefit to offer opportunities. However, one employer mentioned doubts over whether financial support could ever really offset the time they would have to put into the learner, while another said that financial support would not be a solution as it could not replace the personnel.

*"Even if we were given extra money, we haven't got time, and we haven't got the personnel to do the mentoring, the training, the support."*

**Hair and Beauty, Not currently offering, West Midlands**

Financial support may incentivise employers to undertake more training with a learner, although, where a lot of training is required, this figure could be substantial.

*"Financial incentives could help offset it but I doubt it would be enough to cover time put into apprentices."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

Previous research suggests that financial payments can really only attempt to recognise the additional costs incurred by business, rather than attempt to cover the precise costs. Any financial support for T Level placements may therefore be best pitched as an incentive or acknowledgement of costs, rather than as an attempt to fully meet them.<sup>11</sup>

## **Unmet challenges**

Interviews provided the least insight into how the challenge presented by legal and regulatory requirements can be overcome, as these barriers were generally seen as being beyond the control of the employer or learning provider. Health and Safety and age-related regulations meant access was denied to learners under a certain age or without certain certificates and qualifications, meaning there was no opportunity to offer placements.

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<sup>11</sup> DfE (2018) Exploring the funding and support for apprentices with additional support needs - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/697649/Exploring\\_the\\_funding\\_and\\_support\\_for\\_apprentices\\_with\\_additional\\_support\\_needs.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697649/Exploring_the_funding_and_support_for_apprentices_with_additional_support_needs.pdf)



## Chapter 4: Reactions and perceptions of T Level industry placements

### Introduction

This section of the report will discuss employer perceptions of the T Level reforms. After existing provision had been explored, employers were provided with information on the key features of T Level industry placements. These features will be considered in turn and employer responses to each will be discussed. We will cover overall impressions, any concerns and any further questions that employers raised. Finally, we cover any pieces of information that employers thought would be key to their decision-making about industry placements, where this was not covered in previous sections.

The key features of T Level industry placements that were provided to employers during the discussion were as follows:

- It will involve a 45-60 day industry placement in an industry directly relevant to the course being studied;
- It will be a mandatory requirement and students will not be able to complete the T Level qualification without having completed an industry placement;
- The students are likely to undertake the placement in the second year of their course, to ensure they have gathered basic skills and knowledge in their subject area;
- Students will also have undergone preparation to ensure they are ready to go on their placement;
- Employers will be able to decide whether or not to pay the learner and how much you would pay them; and
- Employers will have a named contact at the learning provider whom you can contact to discuss any issues or queries.

### Length of placement – 45 to 60-day placement

Overall, employers had a positive first impression of the length of the placement. Forty-five to sixty days was felt to be a good length of time for the learner and employer. This length of placement would provide enough time for the learner to settle in, get up to speed with tasks and hopefully undertake some 'meaningful' and industry relevant work.

Employers that were positive about the placement duration gave a number of reasons for this response. In the main, their reasoning appeared to relate to the motivations element of the COM-B behavioural model, as their responses tend to focus on the benefits to the learner and business. Firstly, a sense of altruism in that work experience and placements

were of general benefit to young people, as they provide experience of the 'working world'. The experience that employers are referring to tended to relate to the softer skills that would be gained from this experience. For example, communication skills and appropriate work behaviour.

*"I definitely think there are huge benefits to actually going out and learning some life skills."*

**Legal, Accounting and Finance, Not currently offering, East of England**

*"It will give people a good understanding of the working environment and it sounds like a good balance of practical and theory work. 45-60 days is about the right length for that entry level of work."*

**Construction, Not currently offering, East of England**

The second motivation cited by employers was that this length of placement gives the learner the chance to develop some valuable 'practical' industry-relevant experience. Employers felt that the period was sufficient to enable not only shadowing of other employees but to undertake training and specific industry-relevant tasks or projects. This type of experience was identified as more 'meaningful' than simply spending time in the workplace.

*"They can do more meaningful tasks; get used to the discipline of coming into work every day; familiarise with their supervisors/ team; have some clear expected outcomes from the placement."*

**Digital, Currently offering, East of England**

*"I think it's a good idea - students would get a lot more out of 2 months rather than 2 weeks."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

This length of the placement was not only felt to be beneficial to the learner. A longer placement provides scope to reduce the level of supervision (and thereby resource required from staff) later in the placement. Some employers expressed a hope that, a few weeks into the placement, the learner would be able to undertake certain tasks on their own to a reasonable standard and become a 'second pair of hands', rather than a burden to the business.

*"They'll get used to the routines, they'll get used to the children, they'll become more helpful. Within a couple of weeks, they'll be contributing to the school, and then I think they'll learn more."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, East Midlands**

## Concerns placement duration too short

Not all employers felt the length of the placement would work for them. There were concerns from a few employers that the placement was, in fact, too short and would not provide enough time for the learner to develop necessary skills to undertake the role effectively.

These employers tended to be from established and traditional apprenticeship routes, such as Engineering and Manufacturing, Construction, and Agriculture and Environment and Animal Care. This group could not see the value of supporting this type of qualification over an apprenticeship. T Level placements may require less from staff in terms of supervision than an apprenticeship, but they believed the longer-term gain would be lower for the business. Similar concerns were expressed by employers in the Legal, Accounting and Finance route. They felt that the role was too complex to be covered in such a short length of time and the supervision time would be a burden with little benefit.

*“45-60 days at that is it? In a year? ... in our industry as installation, they are better off learning on the job than from a piece of paper ... yes [traditional apprenticeships]. There is a lot of theory in the electrical industry but they are not going to survive on theory alone ... we wouldn't be able to send one out as an electrician.”*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*“The timeframe isn't long enough for anyone to learn the job - we'd be looking at least 6 months. It would be too much of a burden to us... someone would have to sit with them all day.”*

**Legal, Accounting and Finance, Currently offering, South East**

## Concerns placement duration too long

Conversely, a few employers were concerned that the placement would be too long and create a burden on the organisation. This concern reiterates the COM-B behavioural capability barrier that was noted earlier in this chapter. Key concerns for this group of employers appeared to relate to the level of supervision that would be required and the availability of necessary tools/software. Financial implications were raised specifically in relation to supervision time and access to tools/software.

*“We would have to have a spare [computer] all the time just ready and we don't want to invest in a computer that is just going to sit there for the rest of the year and for a small organization that is quite a lot of investment ... and the overhead for looking after somebody for that length of time that isn't necessarily bringing in fees.”*

**Construction, Currently offering, London**

A particular concern for some employers in this group was their capacity to provide meaningful work for the learner over such a 'long' period of time. These employers were aware that it would not be beneficial for the learner if they ended up only being able to take part in basic 'admin tasks' or 'tea making'. Employers with these concerns tended to be small establishments and only currently offering short term work experience, around 2 weeks in length.

*"It does seem a large chunk of time as to what you would actually do with that student... You've got to have a task, or a set of tasks for them to do... I would struggle to think, 'Well, where are we going to put them and what are we going to do with them for that length of time?' Obviously, you want to make it related to their studies."*

**Creative and Design, Currently offering, East Midlands**

## **Mandatory nature of the placement**

Employers were generally positive about the mandatory nature of the placement; they felt it would ensure that all T Level learners gained first-hand experience of the industry that they intended to work in. Employers reiterated that the learner would find it difficult to know whether they were suited to the industry unless they had that experience. Employers felt that an industry placement would either solidify an individual's desire to work in their chosen industry or prove that this may not be the correct career path for them. Either of these outcomes would be useful for the learner, but also for potential future employers.

*"I think it would open their eyes to the profession that they have chosen very quickly. If it doesn't suit them, you'll find out very quickly."*

**Catering and Hospitality, Currently offering, East Midlands**

*"Makes sense to be mandatory, having a work placement/experience that's part of the programme is important to validate... what that profession is going to be about."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

However, some employers raised concerns about whether a mandatory placement was the right approach. Some employers had concerns around learners being 'forced' on placements and these concerns materialised in two main ways.

Firstly, employers were concerned about the impact of an unwilling mandatory participant on the host organisation. If the learner was not matched appropriately and did not want to be there, the employer would have to dedicate resources to supervision and training without the likelihood of any contribution or benefit in return. These employers tended to have had similarly negative experiences with work experience or placements in the past.

Secondly, and less commonly, employers were concerned about the potential negative impact on the young person, again related to the quality of matching and having to attend a placement that was not suitable and / or of interest.

### **Further questions on mandatory placements**

Employers were keen to understand how the allocation process would work and what level of involvement the learner, employer and learning provider would have in the process. Employers needed to know that the mandatory nature of the placement would not lead to learners being inappropriately placed in organisations, to ensure they obtained the placement to pass their course.

It was also unclear how much responsibility would fall on the learner themselves to find a placement. They noted that in some areas the learner may encounter difficulties in finding a relevant placement, due to the nature of the local economy. Employers, therefore, felt it was important for learners to be supported through this process of finding a placement.

*"I think it could be very difficult for the student to actually find a work placement; it would depend on what area they are in, what industries are around."*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Not currently offering, South East**

### **Placements based in a relevant industry**

Employers were largely reassured to hear that the industry placement would be focused on an industry relevant to the qualification studied. They felt this would make it more likely that the learner was interested and motivated in their placement. They also saw it as beneficial to the host organisation because, as before, this would increase the likelihood that the learner would bring value to the business.

Similar to views expressed on the length and mandatory nature of the placement, employers felt that an industry-relevant placement would provide the learner with genuine, useful industry experience for their CV and a real sense of their potential future career.

However, some employers had concerns around the extent to which it would be possible to closely match learners to the specific nature of their individual business. This group of employers tended to be using specific software or tools within their organisation, which, without prior knowledge of such software, would limit the usefulness of the placement for learner and host. Employers would either have to spend long periods of time training the learner for little outcome or the learner would be given very basic tasks, which would not directly relate to the course they were studying.

*"My worry is it is going to take considerable management ... we are unique, the only manufacturer in the world for what we produce and the T Levels will be pretty broad."*

**Business and Administration, Currently offering, South West**

Employers with traditional apprenticeship routes, degree level qualification or other long-standing routes into their profession questioned just how 'relevant' the T Levels course content would be to their business. They did not believe that the T Level qualification could fit their needs as well as the current qualification routes that they typically use. They assumed that the T Level qualification would be at a lower level than an apprenticeship and degree qualification.

*"In architecture there are two traditional routes, either a degree or a HNC/ONC at college... T Levels don't seem to go as far as that so I'm not sure of their value compared to those other qualifications."*

**Construction, Not currently offering, East of England**

*"I can't see a set of circumstances where we'd be looking to take on somebody who would come to us via that route... the tutors all have their teaching degree and obviously already have gained their vocational qualifications."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, North East**

### **Further questions on industry relevance**

Employers wanted to know more about the content of the relevant course that the learner would be studying, its objectives and how this could be matched to both their industry and their specific business model. They wanted confirmation that the matching process would be fully developed prior to T Level launch to ensure that learners would be appropriately placed within their organisation.

In addition, employers would welcome greater clarity on how the new T Level qualification will fit with other FE and HE qualifications. To understand whether and how the qualification (and providing a placement) might benefit their organisation, they needed to know more details and exactly how it compared to A-Levels, apprenticeships, NVQs and university degrees.

*"Interesting...depends upon what the qualification will be - is it the same as an A Level but with more practical skills?"*

**Legal, Accounting and Finance, Currently offering, South East**

### **Named contact at the learning provider**

Employers responded positively to the idea of a named contact at the learning provider. This information addressed some previous questions and concerns that they had around the organisation of the placement and mechanisms to address any issues experienced with the learner. A named contact was particularly welcomed by employers with less experience of work experience or placements. These employers had less experience to draw on and, therefore, felt that they would need close contact with the learning provider to ensure they were approaching the placement appropriately. They were also more

hesitant around how they should deal with any issues with the learner and, therefore, having a direct point of contact reassured them that they would have someone to turn to and provide guidance and support, if they should need it.

*"I think the named contact is a good one...knowing who to go to, and finding somebody, especially if it's something fairly urgent that you need clearing up. That's a good thing."*

**Legal, Finance and Accounting, Not currently offering, North East**

*"I think it's good to have a point of contact. It would be good to know who you could go to."*

**Creative and Design, Not currently offering, London**

Equally, employers with negative previous experiences of learners felt reassured by the idea of a direct point of contact, so any issues could be discussed and dealt with quickly.

However, a few employers had negative previous experiences of learning providers and were concerned what the process might be to address poor experiences, should this happen with T Levels. They noted that some previous contacts were inefficient or completely absent, which had negatively impacted on the organisation and learner.

There was a desire to understand what recourse there might be if a learning provider was not fulfilling their duties. Given the critical role that learning providers will play in matching, objective setting and supporting the employer, there needs to be a system in place to raise concerns or complaints.

## **Placements during the second year of the course**

Employers were overwhelmingly pleased to hear that the placement would take place in the second year of the course; it alleviated some of their previous concerns about the level of skills and knowledge the learner would bring to the organisation.

Employers reported that a second-year placement would help to ensure that learners are coming to them with a base level of knowledge of their industry, which they can then put into practice. This information appeared to alleviate some concerns around one of the key capability barriers, outlined by employers earlier in the discussion. Employers felt that a second-year student should not need as much introductory training on tasks, which would help to reduce the burden on supervisory and training time.

*"Knowing they are going to be equipped and it is in their second year they would be more useful to me."*

**Hair and Beauty, Currently offering, South East**



*"We'd definitely be open to these placements if they had finished their first year in college and were prepared for work. I like that process, it means they will have the right sort of life skills and will be ready to slot into work here straight away."*

**Construction, Currently offering, London**

## **Pre-placement preparation and training**

Employers reacted very positively to the idea that learners would have undertaken some preparation and training before starting the placement. Responses were closely linked to those given on other features, such as the placement taking place in a relevant industry and during the second year of the course. The key positive for employers in this respect is that these features ensure that the learner is better prepared for the placement – maximising value for both parties.

Employers did have further questions around what exactly the training and preparation would involve, and whether it would be soft skills-related or if it would involve some sector-specific training. Most employers considered that, at a minimum, it should focus on soft skills training, such as appropriate communications, work attire, punctuality, and how to generally behave in the workplace.

*"[Work readiness], that's the weakest area, in my view, among youngsters. They'd need to know how to answer the phone professionally etc."*

**Digital, Not currently offering, London**

## **Payment of wages**

The suggestion that employers could decide whether or not to pay the young person while on placement received a mixed response from employers.

Many employers reported that they would want to pay the learner something, partly due to a sense of it being 'fair' to pay the learner if they are working. These employers tended to feel that it was ethically 'right' to pay the learner for work they had undertaken. Some of these employers also suggested that this would help to show young people that if they work hard they will be rewarded.

*"I think kids needs to be shown, if they work hard and put themselves out, they'd get a reward."*

**Hair and Beauty, Currently offering, East Midlands**

There was also recognition amongst employers that it is a placement of longer duration (compared to previous work experience requirements of 1-2 weeks) and was, therefore, considered to be a long period of time to not pay a learner anything.



Views on how much employers might pay, were mixed and employers struggled to say definitively how much they would offer learners. There were some suggestions from employers that they would pay around the minimum wage or ensure that the pay was in line with what was currently being offered to apprentices and trainees (which tended to be less than the minimum wage).

In addition, some employers were concerned about the implications of not paying the young person, particularly where they had other young people in the business on apprenticeships, or graduate training schemes. They were anxious about how differential treatment might be perceived within the business and by the young people. Employers also raised some concerns around businesses using learners as cheaper labour if they did not have to pay them a wage. They had concerns that these organisations would provide the placement, but the learner would not benefit from the placement, as they would not be provided with 'meaningful' work.

A few employers reacted positively to being able to make the decision or not to pay for themselves, largely where they felt that they either would not want, or could not afford to pay. Employers that were happy not to pay, felt that not paying the learner made financial and business sense, as they did not feel that the learner would be contributing to the business and the opportunity alone to undertake the placement should be enough. These employers once again sited the COM-B capability and resource burden that would fall on the employer.

*"I think it would be wrong to say you have to pay... we don't gain anything from having that person."*

#### **Engineering and Manufacturing, Not currently offering, South West**

Similarly, for some employers in sectors, where vocational placements are already common, paying wages on placement was perceived as out of line with current policy. Vocational students are considered to be in full-time education and, therefore, do not require a wage.

The latter issue around being unable to afford to pay the learner was commonly expressed by small establishments, as some stated that they would struggle to afford to pay learners on placements without any funding support. This would present a COM-B capability barrier for these employers as they would be unable to accommodate the cost of paying a learner.

*"I can't afford to [pay them] because I am only a small employer..."*

#### **Hair and Beauty, Currently offering, South East**

A further group that reported concerns around affordability were organisations that already offered some form of work-based learning opportunity, such as apprenticeships, internships or traineeships. In these cases, there was a possible substitution effect that if

they had to take on and pay T Level placements, they would not be able to afford this alongside other work-based learning opportunities. In this scenario, there is inevitably a trade-off for employers in terms of the benefit they would be likely to derive from the different forms of placement available.

*“We do pay interns but if we had to pay more for work placements that might affect our position. The company doesn't always do well year on year. It might affect what we can offer. If the government offered an amount that would mean we could keep going with a programme of placements regardless if we had high performing shows (pantomimes) or not.”*

**Creative and Design, Not currently offering, London**

Finally, some employers raised a specific concern about the lack of a definite pay policy in terms of potential to create competition for more favourable, paid placements. For employers, this means that those that do not (or cannot) pay will not attract the best quality students. For the learner, there were concerns that disadvantaged pupils may be less able to access placements in their chosen industry if there were insufficient paid placements available to them, which would create a COM-B behavioural model opportunity issue, for the learner. The latter is something that is commonly observed in the internship market in some industries, where demand for placements is high and employers are able to attract high quality candidates unpaid.

## **Structure of industry placements**

During the interview, it was explained to employers that the structure of the placement would not be set and it could work in a variety of ways. Three examples of how the placement could be structured were provided:

- Example 1 – Block (11-12 weeks of 4 days a week);
- Example 2 – Day release (23 weeks of 2 days a week); and
- Example 3 – Mixed – (Full time, 5 days a week, for the first 2 weeks and then 2 days a week for around 18 weeks)

Employers were very pleased to hear that the structure of the placement would not be rigidly set out by the Department and they could shape the structure of the placement to fit their business needs.

Overall, the 'Block' placement was preferred by employers. This model was preferable for several reasons. Employers indicated that this approach to the placement would be mutually beneficial for the learner and business. Having a learner in the business nearly full time would help to ensure that the learner has time to really experience what the role and industry involves. In addition, employers hoped that this would give the learner enough time to pick up key skills, so they could be provided with set tasks to undertake

on their own. This would address a key COM-B behavioural model capability issue by reducing the supervisory burden on staff later in the placement.

*"My strong preference would be for this to be done on a block basis as it would give them more time and scope to understand the requirements of the role and allow us to give them meaningful tasks to do."*

**Digital, Currently offering, East of England**

Employers that were already offering apprenticeships noted that this approach would be in line with current approaches to apprenticeships, which they already know fit well within their business. Similarly, organisations that use rotas noted that this model would be the easiest to build into their current approach to work scheduling – as they would be able to slot this time in more easily and consistently than if the number of days over the different weeks were to change over the placement.

*"That would work with us. That fits in with our 20 per cent off the job for apprenticeships. People would be pretty familiar with that model."*

**Education and Childcare, Currently offering, North East**

However, some employers felt that a 'Block' placement would be too intensive for the learner and/or the business. Concerns were again raised about the level of staff supervision and time that would be needed to support and monitor the learner if they were to be in the organisation 4 days a week.

*"I think the most difficult one would be the full-time block... because it means that whoever's mentoring that person, their time is fully occupied, and they can't really focus on anything for a few days."*

**Craft and Design, Currently offering, North East**

In these cases, the employers suggested that the 'Day release' or 'Mixed' approach would be more appropriate for them. These employers tended to be in small establishments and lacked the capacity to transfer elements of workloads to other members of staff and were, therefore, very concerned about the level of work that would need to be covered if a member of staff was having to manage a learner nearly full-time. The 'Day release' and 'Mixed' models would provide the business with more time to cover the core business functions when the learner was not on their placement each week.

*"If I and my secretaries are seeing to the needs of the work placement person, we are not doing work and that means there will be backlog and we can't do backlogs. I would need some days where the person is not here so that I can clear that backlog."*

**Legal, Finance and Accounting, Not currently offering, Yorkshire and Humberside**

It was also suggested by these employers that the 'Day release' and 'Mixed' approaches may allow for more integrated learning between the T Levels course and industry placement, as the learner would be at college for 3 days a week and undertaking the placement for the remaining 2 days per week. The business could then enquire each week about what the learner had been studying and attempt to integrate tasks, which reflect how that subject is approached within a work setting.

*"If they are at college, we can ask them, 'What did you learn in the last couple of days?'...we can show them how that works in reality."*

**Construction, Currently offering, London**

### **Further questions on the structure of the placement**

Employers would like further information on the structure and timing of the placement in relation to the academic week or year. For example, whether the placement would need to be confined to 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. As discussed in chapter 3, it was felt by some employers that such restrictions would limit the extent to which the learner would get a 'real' experience of what the role might entail. This was evident in routes that typically involved working evenings or weekends: Catering and Hospitality; Health and Science; Creative and Design; and Hair and Beauty.

*"I think that time constraint, if it's meant to be within school time, I think then they are going to miss out a lot, in this particular industry."*

**Catering and Hospitality, Not currently offering, East Midlands**

Similarly, employers with more seasonal work, such as the Engineering and Manufacturing and Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care routes, needed to know at what point in the year the placements would be scheduled– as they would have more capacity to do so at certain points of the year, such as in the spring and summer time.

*"With our industry, it would depend on what time of year it was. So, if we were quiet, they perhaps wouldn't get an awful lot of benefit from it."*

**Engineering and Manufacturing, Currently offering, East Midlands**

### **Additional information requested by employers**

During discussion about these key features of a T Level placement, employers raised some other specific information that they would need to have to enable them to make a decision about their willingness and capability to offer such a placement.

### **Legislation and health and safety requirements**

Employers in routes that require specific pre-placement checks or preparation raised queries around where the responsibility and cost would lie. This was particularly relevant

to Health and Science, Education and Childcare routes where DBS checks would be required to interact with vulnerable patients and clients. Confidentiality agreements were also a consideration for the Legal, Accounting and Finance Route.

Other examples of pre-placement legal requirements included: a specific requirement in some Health and Science settings for inoculations such as flu and viral vaccinations; and routes which involved either physical working environments or exposure to hazardous materials / chemicals such as Construction, Health and Beauty required risk assessments to be completed in advance of placement.

*"As long as they are inoculated and have health and safety training, then yeah [we could offer them] ...I think if they are doing work that is for the course the costs [of inoculations] should be covered by the course."*

#### **Health and Science, Not currently engaged, East Midlands**

Employers noted that learning providers tended to manage these requirements with students doing existing vocational qualifications. They also emphasised that these requirements would need to be considered well in advance. In particular, DBS checks which take time to be approved. Employers would need to receive proof that required checks and preparation had taken place before the student could arrive on site.

Some employers felt that legislation and health and safety requirements may prevent them entirely from offering opportunities in their core business functions. For example, in both the Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing routes, there were concerns raised around hosting industry placements by under-18s, as individuals of that age would not legally be allowed on sites and they would be unable to use certain equipment. This issue was also raised in the Health and Science route, as a few employers noted that under-18s would not be allowed to interact with vulnerable customers on their own. A few employers in the Legal, Finance and Accounting route cited issues, placing learners in certain departments due to confidentiality requirements. However, these employers suggested that they may be able to offer placements in alternative routes, within other business functions such as administration or HR, that would not entail these risks.

### **Location and public transport**

An issue most commonly raised by businesses in rural locations was the difficulty of students reaching placements if they did not have access to a car and had to use public transport. For some, it would be unrealistic for the learner to use public transport on a regular basis to reach the site.

*"With the apprentice that we had, the main issue that we had was cost of travelling coupled with the timetabling of the buses etc....they weren't really conducive to being here on time or getting home at reasonable time."*

#### **Education and Childcare, Currently offering, West Midlands**

Related to the question of paying students on placement, employers in all locations raised questions around whether there would be financial support for the learner to use public transport. If placements were to be unpaid, many employers felt that travel costs should be covered by the business, learning provider or department.

## Overall likelihood of offering T Level industry placements

Employers fell into three broad groups in relation to their likelihood of offering industry placements in future.

Many employers stated that they *would be* willing to offer T Level industry placements, as they were keen to support a scheme that was helping young people into the workplace. However, they did not feel that they could state definitively that they would offer industry placements until they had received further clarification and information on the following key points:

- Content of the course and the objectives of the placement – how well would this be matched to their industry and business model?
- Structure and timing of the placement – will the placement happen at a set point in the year and will the learner be able to be on the placement outside of ‘college hours’ (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)?
- The role of the learning provider – how much of the administration and cost will fall to the learner provider? How will the recruitment and allocation process work and how involved will the employer be?
- How T Level qualifications fit with other FE and HE qualifications – what is the benefit of a T Level over other FE or HE qualifications?
- Guidelines around paying learners – definitive guidance around whether or not they have to pay the learner and how much they would have to pay.

These employers were predominantly already offering some form of workbased learning. This group also seemed to be more altruistic in their motivations; they were keen to offer placements to support young people into work and their industry. Employers also cited addressing future skills gaps as a motivation, particularly in the Health and Science route.

A second smaller group of employers were unwilling to even commit to an opinion on their willingness to offer an industry placement without receiving the information outlined above. These employers were either currently offering work-based learning opportunities and unsure of how industry placements would fit with what they already provide or they were inexperienced with offering work-based learning opportunities and, therefore, did not feel they could suggest their willingness until they received further information on how the placement would work.

A final, small group of employers stated that they would be unlikely or unwilling to offer industry placements. There were two key reasons for this: they did not see the benefit of

T Level qualifications compared with other existing qualifications and/or they had no capacity to offer an industry placement. In these cases, employers felt that the industry placement would still be too short for the learner to pick up key technical skills. This was particularly evident in some of the routes where apprenticeships are more common; Agriculture, Environment and Animal care, Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing. The second reason related to a lack of capacity to offer placements, which tended to be voiced more commonly by small establishments or businesses, which require higher levels of technical skills, such as creative and design.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications for T Levels

The evidence provided within the study shows that, in general, employers welcome the introduction of T Levels, recognising the value of a stronger technical education route for young people, which includes a meaningful and substantial industry placement.

Many employers are already involved in some form of activity to support young people to develop their employability skills and to successfully transition into employment. Engaged employers often offer multiple forms of opportunity, suggesting that once the internal norms or processes are established (as well as links with local educational institutions), it becomes 'easier' for employers to expand their work-based learning offer.

Engaged employers report that they are motivated by the benefits work-based learning opportunities bring to their business by raising the profile of their company and/or industry and by strengthening their talent pipeline. Employers reported that their existing staff also benefit, providing them with opportunities to develop coaching and mentoring skills, and in some instances reducing workload. Slightly less commonly, altruism motivates some employers, who are keen to 'do their bit', to provide young people with their first opportunity on the career ladder and to support their local community.

The main challenge identified by employers (of all establishment sizes) in offering, or offering more work-based learning opportunities was the impact that this would have on staff time and resource. Employers not engaging in this type of activity currently struggled to foresee how they might go about finding the resource for these tasks. They are concerned about their capacity and are reluctant to divert resources away from productive work to training and supervising a young learner.

Our research suggests that capacity to engage is a calculation of return (business benefit) over perceived burden or cost. Employers that are already engaged have a clearer sense of what the benefits are likely to be as well as an understanding of the likely cost. As a result, while the challenges and costs of offering work-based learning opportunities appear to have acted as an insurmountable barrier for some, others have developed their own structures and systems or worked in partnership with others to find ways of minimising or overcoming these costs. Evidence of this calculation can be found in the likelihood of offering the various different forms of work-based learning opportunities. Employers, who offer shorter work experience placements, often do so for altruistic reasons; they recognise there is a low return, but there is also a low cost to doing so. At the other end of the spectrum, employers, who offer apprenticeships to young people, take on a much greater level of commitment and burden because they recognise the greater long-term business benefit of investing in the recruitment and training of new staff.

T Level industry placements currently sit in the middle of the spectrum of work-based learning activities, with higher costs (i.e. longer placement length), but potentially higher (currently unknown) returns.



The research identified three broad groups of employers in relation to their likelihood of offering industry placements in future:

- The largest group are willing to offer placements and have experience of doing so in the past, but they require more information about the operational aspects of the scheme to judge their capacity to do so;
- A smaller group are unable to confirm their willingness or capacity without being first provided with more information, usually because they lack the track record of delivering work-based learning opportunities and associated understanding of costs and benefits;
- A final, small group that report unwillingness or inability to offer placements for capacity issues or a preference for established work-based qualifications such as Apprenticeships.

Successfully generating industry placements amongst the first two groups is likely to require a package of support that demonstrate the company benefits of an industry placement and/or sufficiently minimise the costs to the extent that altruistic motivations are able to kick in.

This research suggests that an effective information and support package would include the following:

- Clear specification of the role of the learning provider and the support that they will provide, to shift some level of perceived burden away from the employer;
- Guidance which includes best practice on how other employers have established support structures to minimise time and resource cost and maximise value to business – this could draw on learning from apprenticeships;
- Potentially a set of core learner objectives for industry placements in each pathway that learning providers could then tailor to meet the needs of their specific course content; and
- Appropriate flexibilities for implementation i.e. flexibility on the structure of the placement to best meet the business need but clarity on whether or not to pay the placements student, as well as suggested (minimum) wage and any travel expenses policy.

It is likely that this kind of detailed information could also help to address concerns amongst those employers in the final group that reported themselves unwilling and unable to provide T Level industry placements due to capacity.

However, there is a specific issue to address amongst the final group of employers related to the location and value of T Levels in the wider educational context. Over recent years, the government has expanded the range of programmes through which employers are invited to provide work-based learning opportunities. As previous research has

highlighted, one of the risks identified is that employers can become fatigued and confused with this expanding breadth of expectations.<sup>12</sup>

There are two specific elements of this issue. Firstly, employers are not currently clear on how T Levels fit with the range of other qualification options available. To be able to understand whether and how the qualification (and providing a placement) might benefit their organisation, they need to understand how it fits with and compares to options such as A levels, apprenticeships, NVQs and university degrees. Where the industry is one in which vocational qualifications are already well-established, the value of a T Level, compared to an apprenticeship or a qualification with a more significant work placement component, is questioned. This is based on a perception that a primarily classroom-based qualification is a poor substitute for work-based learning.

Secondly, this research shows that particularly in routes where apprenticeships and other vocational training programmes are already established, we are likely to see trade-offs between employers' willingness to offer T Level industry placements and their ability to continue with existing vocational placements, traineeships and apprenticeships.

Generating engagement amongst this group of employers will be more challenging. It is likely to require coordinated communications across responsible departments and agencies to locate T Levels within the wider educational landscape. Such communications could usefully highlight good practice in systems, structures and partnership working that can minimise or overcome supervision costs; this would help to enhance perceived capacity and reduce the risk for potential for trade-offs or substitution between different forms of work-based learning.

## Recommendations

The research suggests that in order to promote engagement and enable employers to make informed decisions about their capacity to engage with T Level industry placements, the following will need be addressed.

Firstly, employers should be given clear information, in order to inform their capacity calculations:

- What will be expected of employers?
- What will the financial cost of meeting these expectations be (e.g. staff supervision time, training, legislation and health and safety requirements)?

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<sup>12</sup> DfE (2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-placements-call-for-evidence-report>

- What type and level of support (including potential financial support) will be available?

Secondly, the role of the learning provider needs to be clear and must minimise the burden on employers. Employers were keen for learning providers to minimise this burden by: matching young people to an appropriate placement; providing pre-placement preparation and training; and providing ongoing support for both the employer and young person. It is crucial that learning providers are appropriately skilled and equipped to fulfil this role in the way that employers expect.

Finally, to develop and implement T Level industry placements, employer and industry-specific considerations should be taken into account. This includes consideration of employer support, particularly for SMEs where the resource requirement for supervision may be acute. There is also a need for particular consideration of routes where there are barriers to providing a 'meaningful' placement, such as legal and safety restrictions, or where there are already well-established technical education routes.

Addressing these challenges will help bridge the gap between employers' willingness to engage in T Levels and their capacity and capability to do so.

## Appendix 1: Summary of route-level key findings

Route	Current offer (outlined in Chapter 2)	Perceptions of T Levels (outlined in Chapter 4)	Key drivers (outlined in Chapter 2)	Key barriers (outlined in Chapter 3)
Agriculture, Environment and Animal care	<p>Work placements were the most common type of offering, with a focus on helping to ensure a pipeline of future (young) talent into the industry.</p> <p>Placements can be seasonal – i.e. starting in summer:</p>	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Course length is too short.</li> <li>- How T Levels fit with other qualifications. Particular interest in how this fits with apprenticeships. Concerns around location and travel.</li> <li>- Seasonality and scheduling.</li> </ul>	<p>Will help to fill the skills gap in the future.</p> <p>To inspire the next generation to work in the industry.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource.</p> <p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical work.</li> <li>- Working with animals.</li> <li>- Accessing the worksite (rural).</li> </ul> <p>Challenging to offer meaningful work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learner needs experience or knowledge to do menial tasks such as filing paperwork.</li> </ul>
Business and Administration	<p>Each type of work-based learning opportunity was relatively common, especially work placements. Work placements tend to be offered to degree level students – such as third year sandwich placements.</p>	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Paying the learner.</li> </ul>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility.</p> <p>Fits well within the organisation's ethos.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource.</p> <p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security concerns over cash handling.</li> </ul>

Catering and Hospitality	Work experience and placements opportunities were the most common type of opportunity offered. They were mostly ad-hoc lasting one to two weeks with school pupils, with such opportunities coming about after employers are approached by schools or colleges.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- Mandatory nature.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Paying the learner.</li> <li>- Scheduling of hours – evenings and weekends.</li> </ul>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility.</p> <p>Helps to fill the skills gap now.</p> <p>To inspire the next generation to work in the industry.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource.</p> <p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessing the worksite (rural).</li> <li>- Health and safety requirements of working in a Kitchen.</li> </ul> <p>Challenging to offer meaningful work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most meaningful work is done outside typical 'college' hours.</li> </ul>
Construction	Apprenticeships were the most common type of opportunity offered by employers in the construction route. These opportunities are well established with employers having offered them for several years. Work placements and experience were less common, mainly offered ad hoc through family connections.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> <li>- Pre-placement training.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Course length is too short.</li> <li>- Course content.</li> <li>- How T Levels fit with other qualifications.</li> </ul> <p>Particular interest in</p>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility.</p> <p>Fits well within the business structure.</p> <p>Will help to fill the skills gap in the future.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource.</p> <p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restrictions on under-18s accessing sites.</li> <li>- Need for CSCS certificate to access site.</li> </ul>

		<p>how this fits with apprenticeships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legislation and health and safety (e.g. physical working environments and/or exposure to hazardous materials / chemicals and CSCS qualifications/cards).</li> </ul>		
Creative and Design	<p>Work experience and work placements were more common than apprenticeships with a view to attracting or strengthening recruitment pipelines for skilled individuals (usually graduate level for work placements), or inspiring younger generations through work experience.</p>	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Course content.</li> <li>- Paying the learner.</li> <li>- Scheduling of hours – evenings and weekends.</li> </ul>	<p>To inspire the next generation to work in the industry.</p> <p>Strengthens their recruiting pipeline.</p> <p>Will help to fill the skills gap in the future.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intense supervision required with tasks requiring a high level of technical skill.</li> </ul> <p>Challenging to offer meaningful work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lengthy training required to carry out work.</li> </ul>
Digital	<p>The offering of each type of work-based learning opportunity was relatively uncommon among the employers interviewed. Where work experience or placements was offered this tended to be through ad hoc requests.</p>	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> <li>- Pre-placement training.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Fits well within the organisation's ethos.</p> <p>Strengthens their recruiting pipeline.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial impact in terms of lost productivity.</li> </ul> <p>Concerns about the upfront administrative burden.</p>

	Apprenticeships were more formal and strategically focused on bringing in new talent to the business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory nature.</li> </ul>		Challenging to offer meaningful work: Highly technical work means limited opportunities to do anything but shadow a member of staff.
Education and Childcare	High levels of engagement with each type of work-based learning opportunity. Community links and personal experience among senior personnel are key motivators behind offering such opportunities.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- How T Levels fit with other qualifications.</li> <li>- Legislation (e.g. DBS checks).</li> </ul>	<p>To inspire the next generation to work in the industry.</p> <p>Fits well within their industry/sector.</p> <p>Gives current employees a chance to coach or mentor new workers.</p>	<p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being in contact with young and/or vulnerable people (DBS checks may be required).</li> <li>- Dealing with sensitive or confidential information.</li> </ul> <p>Concerns about the upfront administrative burden:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too much paperwork.</li> <li>- Risk assessments for under-18s.</li> </ul>
Engineering and Manufacturing	Work placements and apprenticeships seen as useful and traditional routes into the industry for young people.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Course length is too short.</li> <li>- Course content.</li> </ul>	<p>Will help to fill the skills gap in the future.</p> <p>Strengthens their recruiting pipeline.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intense supervision required for learners to carry out potentially dangerous tasks.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How T Levels fit with other qualifications. Particular interest in how this fits with apprenticeships.</li> <li>- Seasonality and scheduling.</li> </ul>		<p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legal requirement to supervise under-18s / unqualified when performing tasks.</li> <li>- Under-18s / unqualified prohibited from performing tasks.</li> </ul> <p>Negative previous experience.</p> <p>Lack of confidence in the skills / productivity of young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial cost of low productivity of placement student.</li> </ul> <p>Concerns about the upfront administrative burden.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional health and safety requirements for under-18s (including risk assessments).</li> </ul>
Hair and Beauty	Work experience was the more common type of opportunity offered by the	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> </ul>	Brings a fresh perspective to our organisation. Gives	Impact on staff time and resource.



	employers interviewed. Largely involving work shadowing facilitated through requests from local schools and colleges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Legislation and health and safety (e.g. exposure to hazardous materials / chemicals). Scheduling of hours – evenings and weekends.</li> </ul>	current employees a chance to coach or mentor new workers.	Negative previous experience.
Health and Science	Another route where employers tend to have strong links with local communities and offer work experience and placements as part of CSR policies. Placement seen as a traditional route for students (college and degree level) to enter health professions.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> <li>- One point of contact at learning provider.</li> <li>- Pre-placement training.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources. Legislation and health and safety (e.g. DBS checks and inoculations)</li> <li>- How T Levels fit with other qualifications.</li> <li>- Paying the learner.</li> <li>- Scheduling of hours – evenings and weekends.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>To inspire the next generation to work in the industry. Corporate Social Responsibility.</p> <p>Gives current employees a chance to coach or mentor new workers.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supervision and mentoring required throughout entire apprenticeship (care work).</li> </ul> <p>Nature of work means it is impractical for young people to take part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of the learner can be disruptive for vulnerable patients (DBS checks may be required).</li> <li>- Age restrictions or certification/qualifications to access certain areas</li> </ul>

				<p>of hospitals (e.g. X-ray room, operating theatre).</p> <p>Challenging to offer meaningful work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unless experienced or qualified, type of work the learner can carry out in a care home is very limited.</li> </ul> <p>Negative previous experience.</p> <p>Concerns about the upfront administrative burden:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too much paperwork.</li> </ul> <p>Lack of confidence in the skills / productivity of young people.</p>
Legal, Finance and Accounting	Offerings of work experience and work placements tended to be through word of mouth or family connections, for admin roles or back office functions. They were also used in some cases to help overcome busy periods.	<p>Key positives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Second year of course.</li> </ul> <p>Key concerns/barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff time and resources.</li> <li>- Course length is too short. Role is too</li> </ul>	<p>Fits well within the organisation's ethos.</p> <p>Corporate Social Responsibility.</p>	<p>Impact on staff time and resource.</p> <p>Challenging to offer meaningful work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data protection issues mean learners would be limited to observation.</li> </ul>

		<p>complex to be covered in this length of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Course content.</li><li>- Legislation (e.g. confidentiality agreements).</li></ul>		<p>Concerns about the upfront administrative burden:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rigorous security checks if cash handling involved.</li></ul> <p>Lack of confidence in the skills/ productivity of young people.</p>
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## Appendix 2: Sample breakdowns by secondary quotas

Table 1: Region breakdown achieved

Region	Achieved
North East	12
North West	9
Yorkshire and Humber	7
East Midlands	18
West Midlands	12
East of England	12
London	17
South East	18
South West	15

Table 2: Urban and rural breakdown achieved

Current engagement in work-based learning opportunities	Achieved
Urban	102
Rural	18

Table 3: Number of potential routes the employer could offer

Number of routes offered	Achieved
1	24
More than 1	96



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