



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance \(CEIAG\), HC 54](#)

Tuesday 24 January 2023

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Members present: Mr Robin Walker (Chair); Caroline Ansell; Miriam Cates; Mrs Flick Drummond; Anna Firth; Nick Fletcher; Kim Johnson; Andrew Lewer; Ian Mearns.

Questions 273 to 320

Witnesses

I: Robert Peston, Founder, Speakers for Schools, and Political Editor, ITV News; Richard Hamer, Education and Skills Director, BAE Systems; Graeme Napier, Director of Improvement, Academies Enterprise Trust; John Snell, Headteacher, Welton Primary School.



Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Robert Peston, Richard Hamer, Graeme Napier and John Snell.

Q273 **Chair:** Welcome to this sixth session of our inquiry on careers education, information, advice and guidance. We are delighted to be joined by a panel of experts on this area from the schools and beyond, so you are all very welcome. Perhaps, just in starting the session, I could ask you to talk through some of the work that you do regarding careers provision and to introduce yourselves.

Richard Hamer: I am Richard Hamer, education and skills director at BAE Systems. For those of you who do not know, we are a defence, aerospace and security-based company. We are committed to supporting young people, and that is because we need a strong pipeline of talent to meet our current and future skills needs.

By way of context, last September, we recruited over 1,000 apprentices and over 700 graduates. This year, we are planning to recruit 40% more, so 1,400 apprentices and over 1,000 graduates. We have more than 50 apprenticeship programmes, ranging from electrical fitting to welding, nuclear engineering and data analytics.

To support that range of programmes, and to encourage greater diversity, we need a strong education programme and close partnership with schools, colleges and universities. Our flagship programme in terms of reaching out to schools is our schools roadshow. We work with 9 to 12-year-olds, together with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. Through that, we engage more than 500 schools and more than 100,000 young people each year.

That is aimed at young people, but we also want to work with those closer to the point of recruitment, so work experience is also very important for us, targeted primarily at 14 to 16. Last year, we provided over 450 placements for young people, particularly with a focus on support for apprenticeships and runs into apprenticeships. Of those 450, 100 were for women and 120 were for ethnic minority young people.

We have more than 1,000 STEM ambassadors supporting our links with schools across the country. Those are essential because they are often young people themselves—apprentices and graduates. We are a founder member of Movement to Work. We work with the Prince's Trust and we are keen to support the young unemployed. Through that initiative, we have provided more than 700 placements. Of those, more than 400 have found a job with us or with someone else, or have gone into education. In fact, we have recruited into our apprenticeship programmes 145 of those young people.

We also work with WorldSkills. Our apprentices take part in that, but we also use WorldSkills as a great way to excite and inspire young people about apprenticeships. Lastly, we also work with the Careers and Enterprise Company. We are one of its cornerstone employers and do a



lot of support in particular for it and with it in the north-west of England. That is a little bit from me about me, BAE Systems, and our commitment to schools, college, universities and young people.

Q274 **Chair:** Thank you very much. Robert, colleagues will all know you, of course, but you are here in your capacity as the founder of Speakers for Schools, so perhaps you could talk about that and its impact.

Robert Peston: Thanks very much for inviting me here today. I set up Speakers for Schools in 2009. Initially, it was focused exclusively on arranging free talks by inspirational people in state schools, and we still do lots of those. In the last academic year, we organised 870 free talks by eminent people. Some of them would have relevance to the Gatsby benchmarks, because they are by employers, business leaders and leaders of institutions of various sorts, but, when it comes to the Gatsby benchmarks, the other activity that we do is probably more relevant.

I set the charity up because I went to a state comprehensive school in north London and was very keen to do what I could to level the playing field in respect of access to brilliant people between state schools and the independent sector. The other thing that had bugged me for years—and I imagine that you have all had experience of this—is that, when it came to work experience in my different guises, I would be rung up by friends with teenage kids, and they would say, “Can you do me a huge favour and take Chloe or George for a few days?” It was clear to me that this was a very nepotistic system. It is quite hard to turn somebody down when they ring up in those circumstances.

The other thing that was very striking when one surrendered and took people in is that the kids who came in did not really want to be there. They were there because they were doing a favour to their parents more than anything else, and so it was suboptimal for everybody.

A few years ago, we decided at Speakers for Schools to get into the provision of work experience, targeted in particular at less advantaged schools and less advantaged students. In the past year, when it comes to placements, we provided 64,000 students with work experience opportunities.

We have a hybrid model. When Covid hit, all in-person work experience was cancelled, but we did not want to abandon young people, and so we designed a virtual pathway using Google Classroom. We now offer both in-person and virtual. I would argue that both have merits and, maybe later on, we might want to talk a little about the difference between virtual and in-person, and why I am a firm believer that this hybrid model is good in itself. Now that Covid is less of a problem, we are not abandoning virtual.

That is probably enough from me at this stage. I imagine that there is quite a lot that we might want to explore about the value of these things and all of that.



Graeme Napier: My name is Graeme Napier. I am the director of school improvement for Academies Enterprise Trust. We work with approximately 30,000 young people across the country, in all regions. One of our priorities has been focusing on that idea of positive and sustained destinations for young people, and the way that our careers curriculum begins to inform and impact that, and looking at the destinations that young people have secured and sustained by 25, and where they end up.

One of the huge bodies of work that the trust has undertaken is about embedding careers education within the core curriculum. Of the three or four really important projects that we have conducted, one involved the teaching of careers education through the maths curriculum. One thing that we established very early on and were very aware of is the need for teachers delivering careers education to feel that they had the experience and expertise to be able to do that effectively and, from a trust perspective, to do that at a high standard.

One thing that was really interesting from this project was that, where that education was delivered through the core curriculum—maths as an example, delivered by maths teachers—one of the big switches that we saw was that there was that feeling that it was being delivered with that expertise required. That is perhaps something interesting to explore today.

John Snell: I am John Snell, headteacher of a primary school. I am delighted to be able to join in the conversation today, waving the flag for our primary colleagues. I am really passionate about career-related learning, and what I want to put across today is the importance of that from an early age. I have some good experience of that here at Welton Primary School, which is about 10 miles out of Bath, in the south-west. I have been a headteacher for 12 or 13 years now, and a senior leader for getting on for 20. My role is to add true value to what it is that we do in schools, and career-related learning is one of those things.

The whole word “career” is an interesting one that I have in my mind to unpick a bit with our young people. Whether people have careers for life or not is an interesting conversation, but I want to perhaps share with you later a little bit about how I engage our young people with the opportunities to meet people and to raise their aspirations, I could argue. Perhaps one would also argue that children have good aspirations. It is about widening those aspirations, perhaps, and giving them more opportunities, which I am really interested in sharing.

I also do a bit of consultancy work from time to time. I am here waving the flag for primary schools. There is lots of good practice to share and, hopefully, over the next hour or so, I will be able to share that with you. That would be good.

Q275 **Chair:** You have all had experience of dealing with employers and with schools, and we have heard consistently, through the inquiry, concerns



about the barriers that there are between them. I wonder if you could talk through some of the barriers that you have encountered and how you have overcome those in terms of making those connections.

Robert Peston: I imagine that you have looked at the question of commitment by schools to projects and experience related to the workplace. One of the things that we encountered right from the start, when we were simply doing the talks, is the difficulty within a very busy school of finding an individual in that school who is prepared to take responsibility for the relationship with us. Initially, it was slightly frustrating.

There were some schools that instinctively understood the value of an education that was more than just the curriculum. There was a culture within the school that meant there were a few people in the school we could talk to about the services we offer, or, indeed, a named individual. Then there are other schools that are just so busy keeping the basic show on the road that it was extremely hard to have that point of contact and develop those sorts of relationships.

Right now, we are still in a period of catch-up from the Covid hiatus and, truthfully, that has made it more challenging for us, simply because, understandably, schools are very much focused on the academic catch-up that many of their students need. Again, getting the teachers to recognise that, even so, work experience and inspirational talks will be good for this cohort is just a bit harder.

Equally, persuading them that 14 to 18-year-olds would benefit from a few days away from school with an employer is also hard when there is this big catch-up needed. It is a difficult time and we are in this rather odd position of having more employers than students at the moment. Doubtless, at some point, with any luck, as the culture changes, there will be more demand than supply, but, right now, the issue for us is not finding committed employers who want to provide rich work experience, but convincing schools that this is in the interest of their young people.

Q276 **Chair:** John and Graeme, from your perspective in schools, how do you manage that? How do you make sure that there is a clear point of contact and that there is someone taking things forward?

John Snell: It has to come from leadership, without a doubt, and that is where I am in a good position to share this good practice with other colleagues. We are in a big multi-academy trust, so I am able to promote that. It comes from clear leadership, but any good headteacher or senior leader, certainly in primary schools, will recognise the value of providing children with opportunities more than just the national curriculum, which, in itself, will not prepare children for life, so to say.

One of the barriers could be to think about how you get buy-in from schools, but, from my experience, all teachers just want the very best for their young people. As I will perhaps talk about a little bit later, one of the examples of how we have overcome the barriers is using things like



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Primary Futures to get volunteers in and to get volunteers online. It is really quite simple.

Curiously enough, within the primary sector, there are not huge numbers of barriers. I can see that, further along the food chain, perhaps there are, but, certainly from my experience, if you have the value instilled in you—and I know that all my colleagues have that—to find ways to get people to come into schools, there are ways to do it. It is quite easy.

I just mentioned Primary Futures, and I am sure I will mention a bit more about that a little later on. The fact that we can get volunteers to come in, as Robert says, either hybrid, virtually or in person, is so incredibly powerful for our young people.

Over the course of the last five or six years, I have not found too many barriers in primary schools, once you have the buy-in and understanding. A barrier probably would be, we would all agree, time in schools, but, once you have overcome the fact that you are just sharing this good practice, I find that there is a lot of buy-in from colleagues across schools. Within primary, there is a lot of exciting work going on, so perhaps there are not so many barriers in primary.

Q277 **Chair:** That is good to hear. Graeme, you also have the challenge of looking at organising work experience and, as you said, integrating that into your curriculum. Can you talk a little bit more about that and what you have done to break down those barriers to people coming in from outside?

Graeme Napier: I would agree with what Robert said earlier in terms of our experience and the experience that the schools have had. Engagement with employers has been relatively straightforward, and there have been few barriers to enable students to engage with employers.

On the point of experience of the workplace, that is a very different situation. There are clear regional disparities around what those experiences look like and the availability of those experiences for young people, which is a challenge that we have not necessarily found all of the answers to yet.

A significant barrier around the point of work experience is where the experience that is planned for young people is too inflexible, so where the programme of experience in the workplace is very fixed and set around what that needs to look like and how that will be delivered, both by the school and by the employer. Where there is inflexibility, it can put employers off.

Where we have found that we can reduce that barrier is in bringing more flexibility to what experience in the workplace looks like for different young people at different stages of their education. It is about a big shift away from that very traditional idea that a work experience placement is a two-week block that looks like this and has to happen on these dates,



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so that we can engage with a wider selection of employers that can provide something that looks slightly different to that. That has been a big shift for us.

Q278 **Chair:** Would you agree with that, Robert? Are the employers that you work with today happy with that flexibility or does that pose extra challenges?

Robert Peston: Most of the employers that we deal with want our advice. When we started down this track, one of our first partners was the Bank of England. One thing that was tremendously encouraging about that was the extent to which the Bank of England worked very closely with us to design a programme that was very exciting for the kind of cohorts of disadvantaged kids we were able to supply.

Both sides ended up really pleased, in the sense that the Bank of England staff met some people they would not normally have met, they were energised by it, and it helped them to think about their own operations in different ways. The young people also seemed to be just incredibly excited and motivated to have that experience. As I say, it was very much a partnership when we designed the programmes, and that is our approach in general.

We do not, on the whole, work with many employers that have very fixed ideas about this. We encourage employers not only to make sure that our young people will meet the boss and meet other people who work there, but also to come up with projects and tasks that help the young people to understand the business, but also with a part of education that sometimes gets lost about the practical side of things.

There was just one very brief thing, because I do think that it is important in the context of design. We have already touched upon this problem that there are some parts of the world where it is harder to get rich work experience. That is partly because, as we all know—and this is a huge political issue in this country—far too many of our more productive businesses are in the south-east and London.

One of the advantages of the hybrid model is that we can, via Google Classroom, connect kids in the north-east, for example, with really exciting businesses here. My own view is that it would be a hugely important step forward if we could arrange work experience where kids are able to stay overnight in a different part of the UK. It is good for them and good for the businesses, but that is challenging at the moment, for a whole variety of safeguarding and cost reasons. One of the reasons why this hybrid model works is that, to use that awful phrase “levelling up”, it does help in that respect.

Q279 **Ian Mearns:** Just on that, Robert, the Google virtual classroom might work to an extent, but it is not the same experience for youngsters from the north-east of England, for instance, as being present within a business. Would you use the Google-type virtual model for youngsters who are even cheek by jowl with the businesses that they want to interact with? The reason I am asking that is that, if it is good enough for



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the kids in the north-east of England, it should be good enough for the kids who are situated right next to the business.

Robert Peston: We do not use virtual simply to close geography gaps in that sense. Most of us recognise, with the possible exception of Jacob Rees-Mogg, that the hybrid model is here in the workplace forever.

I had a very interesting meeting the other night with some FTSE 100 bosses, all of whom said that, as far as they are concerned, except when physical presence on the factory floor or something is absolutely essential, they are assuming that all of their employees, more or less, will work two or three days from home and two or three days in the office, forever. All I am saying is that work experience, virtually delivered, is the new world of work.

Q280 **Ian Mearns:** Graeme referred to part of the problem, which is about regional variations. It is great that you have contact with the Bank of England. The Bank of England has a reach to Gateshead, but it does not have a presence in Gateshead. There is a great stat from the Federation of Small Businesses about the nature of employment and business in the north-east of England, which is that, out of 110,000 to 125,000 companies in the whole of the north-east of England, only about 1,000 have more than 50 employees. That provides a massive capacity issue in terms of businesses engaging in these sorts of processes.

Therefore, how are we going to engage many more small and medium-sized enterprises in this whole venture to get work experience for youngsters in those small and medium-sized enterprises? They are the bulk of the employer base in places like the north-east of England.

Robert Peston: We absolutely agree with you that in-person is very valuable. If I can just be clear, in saying that we are not giving up on digital, it does not mean that I do not recognise how important it is to have a physical encounter. Of course it is. In an ideal world, we would want every student to have the opportunity of a physical encounter and probably every student to have a digital experience as well. Our research shows that, in terms of ambition, skills and job prospects, multiple encounters are more important than just one. This should be more than a box-ticking exercise. This should absolutely be part of the DNA of education.

There are two things here. First, anything that any of you can do to help some of the big employers to spend more time on the ground in somewhere like the north-east would be helpful, because it does seem to me that you can, in a sense, do pop-up things, if employers are really committed.

Secondly, of course we are working with small and medium-sized employers. It will be interesting to see the extent to which this takes off, but, as you have seen, the Careers and Enterprise Company has created regional hubs, which are all about facilitating work experience regionally and locally. We do work with them in a number of limited cases, and this



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facilitating role that they want to have of matching schools with employers via an organisation like us is one that we really encourage.

Chair: We will come back to that. You were talking about major employers. I am interested to hear from Richard about his experience on that front, but I want to bring Nick in first.

Nick Fletcher: I am with Jacob Rees-Mogg. I am sorry, but I think everyone should be at work all the time.

Robert Peston: All the time?

Q281 **Nick Fletcher:** All the time—period. I think we are deeply damaging society as a whole. If people are at work only 50% of the time, young people who are learning from them are learning only 50% of what they should do, and we will pay deeply for this in years to come. Nevertheless, I still think that what you are doing is a fantastic thing, so well done for that.

It is not all about FTSE 100 companies, though, There are 5 million small businesses with fewer than 49 employees employing 12 million people. We need to work with those. As Ian said, the majority of people in the north will work for smaller companies like this. It is not really a question, but just an encouragement, really, to do more to engage with those smaller businesses.

Robert Peston: We are desperate to. Do we have enough? No, we never have enough. We are a hungry, ambitious charity that wants to do as much as we can in this space. Just to be clear—sorry, I was probably a bit flippant—it is not that I take any position on the value of part-time working at home and all the rest of it. It is just that it is the reality of the world we are in, and I do not see it changing any time soon.

There is an issue here, and I do not know whether we are going to get on to this, but even within the services that we provide, and absolutely and explicitly wanting less advantaged kids to take it up, particularly when it comes to digital, there is this gap in digital skills between kids who come from better-off backgrounds, who have access to laptops and phones from the word go, and those who do not.

One of the challenges of this hybrid model is that it rather reinforces the inequality that we have between middle-class kids and less advantaged kids, because of familiarity and comfort with those methods of communication that are now virtual. Anybody who is making policy in this area has to be acutely conscious that it is completely conceivable that the hybrid model you are talking about at the moment will reinforce inequalities rather than levelling up. There are some hugely important challenges here.

Q282 **Chair:** Richard, I have two questions for you. You are a major employer, particularly in the north-west. Some of the students we heard directly from as part of this inquiry were from the north-west of England and were saying that they felt that there were great opportunities with big



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companies like BAE Systems, but that they were quite geographically concentrated. If they were just outside the town, they might miss out on them. What do you do to try to reach out and make sure that, across the region, you can have impact?

Also, on that question of the value of this to the employer, what can you tell us about the benefits to BAE and the impact on your supply chain of being able to engage with young people and bring them in?

Richard Hamer: As you say, Chair, we are unusual in that we are largely in the north of England and in Scotland: 60% of our apprenticeship recruitment is in the north of England, and 75% if it includes Scotland. The bulk of our education outreach activity is also in those areas, although it is national too.

Back to Robert's point, there is a real strength about having an impact on young people. It is about having multiple impacts on young people, rather than just dropping in and dropping out again. Apprenticeship recruitment is still local. For us to do something at quite some distance from where we are is not necessarily in our interests. It is also not necessarily in the interests of the young person, because they would not be taking a job at some distance from us.

We do tend to operate a distance of about an hour or an hour and a half from our large sites in the north-west around Preston, Blackburn and Blackpool. It is a pretty large area that we can cover, and then Cumbria too, but we do have a policy that we do not engage with schools that we cannot really sustain a relationship with or send our STEM ambassadors to. That is not because we are not careful and sensitive, but because we want to make a difference and have a sustained relationship.

It goes back to the issue that we talked about earlier on in terms of building relationships with schools. We can build relationships with schools—like the great headteacher we see online—and academy trusts only if that is an enduring relationship and they can see the benefits. The benefits for us are that it helps us meet our recruitment targets. That is a fundamental thing in terms of meeting our skills today and tomorrow. It is also about our corporate responsibility and showing that we are committing to supporting schools, communities and disadvantaged young people where our employees are based. It is also, as you mentioned, Chair, around the supply chain and things like that.

We are committed to helping support smaller companies and we work with others to do that. Robert mentioned things like the CEC. In the north-west, we work with them and are part of the careers hub. We work together in terms of understanding which schools we support and which we do not, and getting other people to support those that we are not involved in.

One problem has been that you have lots of employers going to one school and then none going to the one next door. With the infrastructure of the CEC, we can help sort that out and, working with the LEP and



whatever, have better arrangements around who we meet and who we do not meet.

We are also working with the Royal Academy of Engineering around T-levels. We have been doing some pilot work around how to make those placements work, which are substantial, at 45-plus days. The academy is going to produce some templates and case studies that show employers in the engineering and manufacturing sector how to run those. It will use case studies like BAE Systems, Jaguar Land Rover or Airbus to show how we help smaller companies do things, using our examples of good practice. We give them examples of projects that we have done, rather than them having to scratch their heads about what they can do with a young person. "Here is an example of something that you can do". There are ways of doing it.

We have touched on the subject of virtual work experience. Our experience was in person. Over Covid, as Robert and others said, it went virtual. We have committed to doing face-to-face, but retaining some elements of hybrid, because, if you are going to Barrow to find out about submarines, young people like to find out what aircraft manufacture or maintenance is like, and so connecting them to another site, which we can do virtually, is quite a rich experience.

They can also connect to other young people. When they are doing a project with us virtually or physically, but connecting together, they can talk to people in different schools who are doing the same thing. It can enrich the experience, but I quite agree that the really important thing for them is getting into the workplace, understanding what it is all about and getting experience.

We have also started to use work experience as a direct tool to recruit. An interview in itself is always a simulation of real work. If you give people real work, you can judge them based upon what they are doing. We have learned things from Movement to Work and the Prince's Trust in terms of disadvantaged young people. They often express themselves better doing the real job rather than in artificial situations. They do not have the opportunity to have parents, back to things that Robert mentioned about the more privileged, who can help and school them to do an interview. For those who do not have parents who can help them do that, you just get them to do the job, make judgments and help people. Is that helpful?

Q283 Chair: That is very helpful. Just to follow up, two of you have mentioned the Careers and Enterprise Company and the network of careers advisors that it supports. Robert, you seemed to imply, and it is my experience from what I have seen, that it is patchy. There is some very good coverage in some places and perhaps less in others. Is that your experience?

Robert Peston: Where we work with them, it has been a very useful and positive experience. You talked to Oli de Botton, who has been taking the CEC through a period of change. It feels to me as though they are



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absolutely moving in the right direction. We welcome the work that they are trying to do with schools to, essentially, help them identify a leader within the schools to have the relationships with organisations like us that make it easier to supply our services. We would massively support where they are going, but it is work in progress.

Q284 **Chair:** From the school's experience, Graeme and John, do you have a view on how that network helps you?

Graeme Napier: From our experience, our relationship with the Careers and Enterprise Company has been very positive. Lots of the projects that we have delivered as a trust and lots of the relationships with employers have been brokered by the company, which has been helpful. At a regional level, it provides the opportunity to make those contacts where they did not exist previously.

More broadly than the regional work, where that regional opportunity just does not exist, as an example, at one of our academies, which is based on the Isle of Wight, experience of the workplace is a challenge and is restricted. The support of organisations like the Careers and Enterprise Company allows those relationships to be brokered over a wider geographical distance, as might be necessary.

John Snell: I was delighted to be able to contribute to the career-related learning *What Works?* reports for the CEC in 2018. Similarly, I am also an ambassador for Primary Futures and Education and Employers. I would like to comment on the conversation that we just had around the hybrid model, getting people into schools and, similarly, providing children with opportunities.

The most powerful thing that I have found as headteacher of a primary school is using the Primary Futures portal for getting volunteers into school. It is as easy as anything. There are thousands and thousands of committed volunteers out there in the world of work, geographically across the United Kingdom, who I can tap into in the space of 10 minutes through a portal. The benefit of that has been that I can get people into school. Just as a quick whizz-through here, I have had expedition leaders, farmers, tree surgeons, nuclear submariners and all sorts of people from the world of work.

Similarly, as well as having people coming into the school, which is hugely empowering, the online materials that are provided, particularly through Covid, are second to none. There are videos and content that we can use in schools and, in fact, have used, as lessons, complete with lesson plans and activities, which are, to all intents and purposes, almost as good as getting people into the school.

We are engaging children across the whole country in a whole wealth of different numbers of people and careers. It just comes back to me in terms of how easy that is. It is so easy to do, and the number of different people I have had coming to schools has been so empowering.



Following through from that, what is really interesting to note is that, in fact, when I do an in-tray and out-tray exercise looking at pupils' views of what they want to be when they are growing up, there is all sorts here. It is absolutely fascinating.

Caroline Ansell: Which one did they want to be?

John Snell: What is nice is that, each time we engage in a career event of any sort and weave it through the whole of our school life, we spend time with the children thinking about what they would like to do. What is really interesting with this is that, as I said at the very beginning, children have very good aspirations, but we need to widen them.

It is very obvious from the start that, when I do this drawing a future process, a lot of young people want to be professional footballers, doctors or perhaps even teachers, because they see those people. As soon as we start having architects, copywriters, musicians or even risk analysts coming into the school, the children's minds are so increasingly opened that, when they repeat this activity, we then have children inspired to be more and greater things.

As much as it is that there are pockets of the CEC work that are coming up, the Primary Futures national picture has been an absolute godsend for me. I just wanted to put that out there, because we then frame it in schools each time we have an event. If it has a STEM focus, we quickly find some volunteers who are related to STEM careers. It might be that we are focusing on careers within the creative arts, so we quickly find volunteers who are involved in the creative arts. I want minimum effort and maximum impact. For me, that is a really excellent example of how that can be and is used to a big extent.

Q285 **Caroline Ansell:** Thank you for that, John. While we might have some scepticism and some caution around the move online and how it is not quite the same as the real world and that sort of interaction, your passion is coming through very clearly, even from the screen.

What you are describing is really fantastic acquisition of knowledge and understanding of some of these roles, whereas my understanding—and I am coming from a secondary school background—is rather more about the skills, particularly some of those soft skills, and the attributes that we need to build and underpin. What would you say to that element of work experience? I know that it is perhaps a little limited because it is more that primary setting.

John Snell: That is a really good question. The culture of a primary school is very much based on values. In our school, our values are very much building towards children's futures. Aspiration is one of our values. That is perhaps an obvious one. We draw in collaboration as well. We talk about respect, about being unique and about courage. All of those values that build our school are then enabling us to prepare our young people for the future.



There is one thing I would comment on that is really powerful. Following these events that we do, whether it is in the classroom or in the main hall, with visitors coming in, I know from my secondary colleagues that, when the children leave our school, they have been more motivated to study a particular subject.

For example, I had a young lady who was from Slovakia in year 4. She did not really say a lot. She just managed school quite well. We had a STEM-related careers day and she was so motivated that she went home and asked her parents to buy her a model kit of a pneumatic arm, which she then filmed herself with a stop-go animation and presented to the whole school. This was a girl whose English was not great but who suddenly grew enormously into presenting in front of the whole school.

From there on in, it was quite clear to us as teachers that she had a real spark for the STEM subjects, to the extent that, when we were doing some work with looking at recycling, she said, "Why do we not build houses out of plastic? They would not biodegrade so quickly". That is really good thinking.

The point that I am making here is that that young girl, and many others before and after her, when they go to secondary school, are fired up with the subjects. They do not pop out of the conveyor belt of primary into secondary, drifting. I know from my secondary colleagues that children who have been to Welton Primary have an interest in these subjects, which is then enabling them to focus on their studies in the future. What I am trying to give you a picture of is the importance of starting at a very young age and the impact that that has further down the line.

Caroline Ansell: That is a point very well made on how learning can be more meaningful, more relevant and more lasting.

Q286 **Chair:** In terms of work experience and the barriers that people face on that front, is there more that the Department or Government could be doing to help remove those barriers?

Robert Peston: One of the interesting questions is the extent to which the incentives in the system are as they should be. If you look at the Gatsby benchmarks, which Ofsted is supposed to take into account when evaluating whether a school is good, bad or indifferent, they are quite soft. Broadly, a meeting with an employer will count towards one, but they do not mandate rich work experience.

We are committed to providing a world in which every student has the opportunity for rich work experience. Compulsion is a complicated aspect of it, whether it is compulsion for the school or for employers, but it is not beyond our ability as a nation to put in place enough supply and enough of an appetite within schools, so that, broadly, anybody who wants work experience gets it. To go to this point that we were talking about earlier of the inequality between disadvantaged and more advantaged children, it is really important that parents start to engage slightly more than they currently do and recognise how important all of this is.



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We have a problem in this country, as you know, of a fundamental sort, which that is our productivity is significantly lower than many of our main competitors. It is 20% lower on average, which means that we are quite a lot poorer per person than many of our main competitors. It is quite interesting that, in countries like France, Norway and Finland, where they have a much more mandated approach to careers and work experience, productivity is significantly higher.

That is not to say that work experience is the answer to everything to do with productivity, but there is a cultural issue in this country that we just have not taken the world of work seriously enough. As we all know, given that we face the growth challenge massively, this should be part of the solution, and I am not sure that it has a high enough priority at the moment.

Q287 Caroline Ansell: Can I ask about part of that solution? Having been responsible for work experience back in the day as head of year, health and safety issues, and safeguarding issues, were all very real. The landscape was an issue, because over 95% of businesses were small and micro, so it was quite an ask.

I was amazed to hear that you have more employers than schools. To your point, Graeme, around moving from the traditional model, what we were operating was that one week or 10 days in the summer. It was quite a limited experience for students by dint of all the administration and the issues around that. Can you describe to me what this more contemporary work experience might look like?

Graeme Napier: From our experience and the way that some of our schools have adopted this model, it might be working, for example, with the same group of employers on multiple occasions across an academic year or across a key stage. That might be working with the same pupils frequently or with different groups of pupils.

To your point about the administrative burden of the traditional model of work experience, that is a real issue for some of our schools, particularly those with extremely large numbers of pupils. Placing 300 or more students on a placement, administering all of that and making sure that those young people are safe is sometimes a barrier that we cannot overcome. The solution and that more flexible approach to work experience has meant that we can. It might be that a proportion of those 300 students are out on a particular occasion.

Caroline Ansell: You are being flexible with the time it starts. It is not a summer experience.

Graeme Napier: Exactly; it might be that students throughout key stage 4 have experiences on multiple occasions at different times of the year.

The other important point to make here is thinking specifically about those groups of young people with particular needs, whether they be additional needs or special educational needs, and what an experience of the workplace looks like for them.



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The flexibility has allowed some supervision of or support for those students, provided by schools, in the workplace. Where there may have been a barrier previously to those young people accessing the workplace, that can be facilitated. For that group of students, we have seen that flexibility have a huge impact in terms of their engagement.

Q288 Caroline Ansell: I can see how the flexibility in the special school can be perhaps more easily accommodated, but, in your mainstream, regular secondary school, the kind of flexibility that you are describing is not always sitting quite comfortably in the culture, so I would be really keen to understand how you have managed that. Is it by working with fewer companies? That would then be a challenge, would it not, around the diversity of experience?

Graeme Napier: Yes. Most of our schools will work with a core group of employers that they are able to place students with. To the point that Ian was making earlier about those smaller employers, where there is more flexibility around what that experience looks like, it enables smaller employers to work with schools where they could not previously, because it provides the opportunity for the school to be more innovative and creative about what that experience looks like.

For example, if we have a really small employer and we are taking a group of students to that employer for one, two or three days' experience in the workplace, it may be that they are accompanied by a member of staff, where an employer does not want to take responsibility for a group of young people, to enable that experience to take place.

Q289 Caroline Ansell: Understood, so it is quite light-footed. On that front, in terms of the school's commitment, what sort of time should be allocated to that senior leader to achieve something so very valuable? What you are describing is quite a demanding role to make a success of it.

On a second point, earlier in our inquiry—forgive me, but I do not remember the statistic—while all those at the inquiry really rallied around the idea of how important work experience was, we found that only 13% of the businesses surveyed were currently offering work experience. What time is required from the senior leader and what do we need to provide so that far more businesses can step in and offer this very valuable experience?

Graeme Napier: The time question is a very difficult one to answer, but it feels like it is the substantive role of that individual in a school and it is likely to take significant amounts of time to be able to deliver it at the kind of quality that we are discussing.

In terms of removing that barrier, it is about that flexibility. Some employers that schools approach do not want to take responsibility for a group of teenagers in the workplace, where, ultimately, they are responsible for that group of young people. We need to be flexible about what that experience looks like, working with those employers that do



not feel that they are able to take responsibility and looking at a model that we can adopt, where that responsibility is shared.

Q290 Caroline Ansell: With the Kickstarter programme, chambers of commerce and other organisations stepped in to be this umbrella-type organisation, and dealt with elements of safeguarding, and health and safety. Is there a vehicle that might deliver similarly for work experience, if we are looking to roll this out at new scale?

Graeme Napier: There probably is. What we have at the moment are school-by-school or regional arrangements that are in place in terms of administering work experience placements, and schools will take their own approach. Perhaps a more structured approach and support mechanism sitting around that would be beneficial.

Caroline Ansell: Robert, it is wonderful to ask questions of you, rather than being questioned.

Robert Peston: My treat!

Q291 Caroline Ansell: You spoke about a legal entitlement to work experience. What impact might a legal entitlement have and how does that differ from a statutory requirement on schools to deliver work experience, which I am not sure has been within their gift?

Robert Peston: It only works if you get the cultural change associated with it, which is a recognition from parents, from students themselves and from schools that better relations with the world of work will encourage broadening of horizons, resilience and adaptability, which we all want to see in our young people.

What we do is not cheap. You were talking about how we increase provision of rich work experience. We try to make our work experience as rich as possible, and we do that because we have a network of members of staff around the country who know about what works, who talk to and work with schools and employers.

One of the more successful things that I managed to do was to persuade a man called Andrew Law, who has a very large charitable foundation, to come in. He works with us as chair and provides a lot of funding. We persuade some employers to give us some money, because they recognise the value of work experience to them, and we have some traditional fundraising, but let us be clear: this is an expensive operation.

Q292 Caroline Ansell: How expensive is it to scale up? What is the percentage of the pupil cohort that you reach with the funding that you have? What would it take?

Robert Peston: At the moment, on the basis of our current budgets, we are doing 60,000 or 70,000 young people. I will be completely clear. We are much more focused on quality than quantity, because the thing that we all know was a problem in the past is that too much of this was box-ticking as opposed to providing genuine opportunity.



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As a charity, we are not going to expand at the expense of providing experiences that improve the life chances of our young people. As a charity, we have a new chief executive coming in, and we know, on the basis of our current infrastructure, we can do a lot more.

Quite how much more, I do not really want to commit to, because this is a discussion on the board and with the new chief executive. We know that, with our existing structure, we could do tens of thousands more work experience without much incremental cost, but just having this base is not cheap.

Q293 Mrs Drummond: Richard, you mentioned earlier that you looked through the supply chain for work experience as well, and I just wanted you to explore a bit more about that and what help you give them in structuring work experience. For small companies, having to bring in a young person for a week or so is a huge issue.

Do you get flooded in on that one week in the summer when all schools seem to do the work experience? The flexibility thing sounds really interesting, but there is that one week when desperate parents are ringing round and trying to find a place.

Richard Hamer: We run work experience over the whole year, so it is not just one week. We engage with schools to support that over the period. We do get many more requests historically than we can fulfil. We are also looking at work experience leading to a job. We have done that using non-consecutive days rather than a block.

With non-consecutive days, there is a bit of a risk, particularly when you are dealing with something like engineering or manufacturing-type skills, that people forget things like health and safety, so you end up having to redo things different times. That is a point that I was going to make in that way.

In terms of how we work with the supply chain, it is really about providing templates and examples. It is not just BAE Systems, but working as a sector with the Royal Academy of Engineering, Ingenuity or Make UK, or producing case studies to show what good can look like in terms of what a project might look like. We talk about the way that you could use your apprentices and graduates as role models. We engage through STEM Learning. Our ambassadors are part of STEM Learning.

Colleagues here have mentioned partnership—not doing things ourselves but doing things with others. By doing things with others, you can then involve your supply chain in those projects, so that they can be alongside our people and benefit from what we and others do, be it Rolls-Royce, the Royal Air Force or the Royal Navy. In that way, what we do can have a multiplier effect.

When procurement has organised events for our supply chain, we have had Movement to Work there. We have had a stand and whatever with Movement to Work, where they have talked about what they do to support the young unemployed. We run events regionally, where we have



involved our supply chain with Movement to Work again, to give examples. Young people we have recruited are most impressed not by people my age but by youngsters who bring to life what their experiences are. It is about utilising them in events like that and also about the supply chain bringing it to life for those other young people.

We have also used our senior staff in some of those events, because they have worked with them on our relationship and trust those people. If they say that this works for BAE Systems, and if you are a chief executive of a small company, that can connect with them too. We often find that it is the young people who really touch the heart, make the story and help with that commitment.

Q294 **Nick Fletcher:** I just want to go back to Caroline's senior leader person. Would that role be best done by somebody who has been in a different industry than education? The success of this is probably down to the enthusiasm of that senior leader. I can see that John is full of enthusiasm, which is wonderful to see, but I have worked in some schools where that is not there and they do not buy into it. They do not see the benefit of that. If you have a leader who has not come from any other industry than education and does not know the benefits of it, that is going to be difficult. Would it be good to bring somebody in on a permanent basis to all schools to work with this?

Graeme Napier: It would definitely provide a different perspective to that work; I completely agree with you. As we touched on earlier, it feels like a substantive part of that position within that school, certainly within larger secondary schools, in terms of the amount of time that would need to be committed to that.

One thing that is quite interesting is about the support for senior leaders in schools who are leading on careers, and there is perhaps a discussion point around that and what that looks like. Whether that be a qualified teacher or an individual from another industry working in a school setting, that training and support is crucially important.

One of the discussions that we have had has been around the national professional qualifications, and there is not one that sits around careers currently. Whether there is an opportunity there and whether the senior leader is a teacher or a non-teaching member of staff in a school, that framework around those qualifications might provide that support that they need.

John Snell: From my point of view, it is not so much work experience, but experience of work. We recognise in primary that our role is not just to pour knowledge into children's heads, but to make them—I do not like the phrase "secondary ready"—life ready. To that end, one of the powerful things that we can do is to talk to our visitors about how they got to be where they are, and so you are already talking the language of apprenticeships; you are talking the language of particular subjects or courses from a very young age.



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I say “young age”; I am talking about reception class age—early years. We have just taken a nursery on. I am not against having volunteers coming in and talking about the language of work with two, three and four-year olds. It is about providing those opportunities.

When you have children who are like sponges, ready to absorb this information, it is only a small shift from delivering the national curriculum as it is to applying value to it. It is very simple, relatively, in a primary school. Most headteachers I know of would certainly not find it a particularly difficult shift to add these little bits into their working world.

I respect that in secondary there is more, but primary is where my passion lies. It is relatively easy to do. Yes, there needs to be some element of co-ordination to it. I am fortunate enough to be working in a huge academy group so I can share good practice. You have buy-in from 17,000 children within our organisation. You do need a bit of that. There is going to be an element of training, support and understanding. Some of my other colleagues are doing things like Fantastic Futures. They are doing all different things, but at heart they are providing the best for our young people now for the future.

Barriers are not much of an issue in primary. It is about celebrating it. As I was going to say, it is about celebrating in terms of really getting the community involved, which we do. Then there is buy-in from parents, who are happy to say, “Can I come in and talk about my job?” “Yes, brilliant, come in”. Similarly, it is about advertising it, whether that is through social media or local newspapers. It is relatively easy. It does require some strategy, but the impact is pretty big.

Q295 Chair: One of the things that we discussed with our other witnesses is the relevance of the Gatsby benchmarks to the primary sector. They are more designed for a secondary audience. Is there tailoring that can go on there to have an approach that fits the primary curriculum?

John Snell: That is a really good question. There would be good elements of crossover. If you unpick the Gatsby benchmarks, we are addressing some of those characteristics through the work we do in primary schools anyway, though maybe not explicitly. I know the CDI has put out some quite interesting information, and I am just coming to terms with what that might look like, in terms of a career development framework for primary schools. There is a lot of good practice there. I am very much about drawing on that.

As I already mentioned, I am already thinking further down the line and addressing that language early on. The question comes, then: should there be an ultimate measure or, indeed, an expectation that primary schools do that? That is a good question. You want to make sure you are not clouting schools for not doing things. You have to be mindful of that and the expectations in schools.



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However, some element of trying to develop a common thread would be beneficial. Ultimately, it is just about giving the opportunity to our children. We are not committing children to be neuroscientists at age four. It is about providing the information at an early age so they can ebb, flow and change, which is the exciting part. Yes, it is a good question, but I cannot comment more than that.

Q296 **Chair:** Graeme, you said in your written evidence that you were doing some work around fitting the Gatsby benchmarks to the primary curriculum. Can you expand on that?

Graeme Napier: That is right. We have taken the view that they provide a really useful structure for what careers provision might look like in a primary setting. Some of the pilot work that has been done has been very positive. That is about drawing those down to key stage 2 initially and then what that looks like in the primary setting. We found that successful careers provision, whether that be secondary or primary, is about culture. I know John has talked about that this morning as well. While the benchmarks provide that framework, what sits on top of that makes the real difference.

One of the really interesting things we found in terms of the primary study is around the stereotypes that perhaps exist within employment and the opportunity at a primary level to target some of those and encourage young people to think in a very different way about their gender, for example, and employment routes that are open to them because of that.

Richard Hamer: We certainly find it very valuable to engage in primary schools. If you look at the distribution of our effort, probably more than 60% is in secondary, but 40% is in primary. That is our schools roadshow and things like that.

Going back to the Graeme's point, that is because we do recognise that, for non-traditional groups in engineering and manufacturing, we need to use role models who are young women, people from ethnic minorities or whatever to change their attitudes about working in engineering, manufacturing and the defence sector.

We see that as helpful. We see that feedback from teachers like John and Graeme, saying it is helpful for us to do that. Being a defence company, we are a little careful not to do stuff too young in schools. I know some people can be sensitive around that, and we need to understand that. We certainly think that it is part of our responsibility to engage with primary as well as secondary.

Q297 **Chair:** That is interesting. That split of 40/60 is perhaps more in primary than we might have expected. It is quite striking. The Department has recently piloted a scheme—it is £2.5 million or so—to roll out careers advice in primary schools in disadvantaged areas. Are there any thoughts from John or Graeme as to the scale of that? Should it be scaled up?



What would you like to see happen in terms of rolling that out?

John Snell: It is probably no surprise, but, from where I am sitting, any extra money is always gratefully received. There is no doubt about that. Genuinely, I would really prefer—I know you have to start somewhere—for this to be a national picture. Yes, I recognise there are pockets of deprivation, without a doubt, but schools all round the country have a need to get involved in this. Similarly, whether you look at pupil premium funding or how you categorise a school, within that, away from the data, there are vulnerable children in my school who probably do not pop up on statistics. Every school needs to have access to this. In that way, you are going to get quick buy-in.

As I have already said, a lot is already happening. I just perhaps want to draw back to the comment before about the gender bias. That is a really interesting part of the work we do in primary schools. It really is quite fascinating to me how noticeable that is from a young age.

Similarly, we did some assembly work this week. Again, it was a Primary Futures video lesson. It was about looking at who might work in construction and who might be a florist. The activity was for the children in my school hall to consider what someone in construction might look like. We had Bob the Builder; we had all those things. Then we met Kimberley, who was on screen talking about her work in the construction industry. It was fascinating watching the children understand that role. Then Jonathan, who was a florist, talked about how he was making these flower displays.

Those very quick and easy things to do have such a big impact on such a big scale. You almost do not need to consider it geographically, although that is important and I do respect that. There is some funding going to Somerset, which is my area. I am just cautious of the fact that we need to be looking at this nationally.

Chair: You would probably find some support around this Committee for that argument as well. That is helpful to hear.

Graeme Napier: I would echo John's view. It is a national challenge. It is a great starting point that this funding is available. It is also important that we do not inadvertently create regions across the country where support is not available through the way in which this project is set up. It is great news that this is off the ground and that we have made a start. The opportunity to expand that across all regions would be the next step.

Q298 **Ian Mearns:** It is not a lot of money, though. It is 55 areas and £2.6 million. You are talking about less than £50,000 per education authority area. Let us not forget that leaves out almost 100 other education authority areas that are not touched by this.

Graeme Napier: It does not feel like a lot of funding to support this. Thinking about the funding within the system, the budget for one school might be four or five times the money we are talking about here. To roll



out a programme nationwide with the funding that has been allocated would present some challenges, I am sure.

Ian Mearns: Yes, winners and losers.

Q299 **Anna Firth:** John, I want to follow up on your last point. Your passion for careers has come across loud and clear despite the fact that you are joining us virtually, which is interesting in itself. I would expect careers and their importance to be really fundamental in your school.

I am a big believer in the captain of the ship setting the culture. I wonder whether there is a piece of work still to be done to make sure that, when headteachers are recruited and trained, the importance of careers and career development in their schools is on a par with teaching and learning.

John Snell: Yes, I would agree. You could step that back to teacher training. There is an amazing early-career teacher in my school, who I recruited. From conversations with her, her training around that aspect was non-existent. There is a whole bit of work on that in terms of what the NPQH might look like and particularly the Association of School and College Leaders. How that can be weaved in will be really important.

Yes, it does come from a culture of leadership without a doubt, but within a school, if there is autonomy from the staff to try things out, which they have here, there is a natural desire to want the best. We have a team of teachers, teaching assistants and midday supervisors who will all be aware of the language of this.

It does take time. There is no doubt about that. You cannot, on day 1, on 1 September, suddenly say, "Right, everyone, we are really going to do this". It is a grower. It is going to take some time. By that, I mean that probably over the course of a year you are developing a culture, but then it has stickability to it. It is not like some initiatives that might come and go. There is buy-in because the impact is so great. You can see the motivation increase in young people; the language they use around futures is so powerful.

It will not take a lot in terms of training to see value attached to this. In answer to your question, yes, there does need to be an element of that drawn into the headship training qualification over time.

Q300 **Anna Firth:** We have heard a lot of evidence about the need to embed careers in the curriculum. Yet we have also read evidence from the Sutton Trust that not all teachers are aware of the jobs associated with the subjects they are teaching. In fact, we have heard that history teachers seem to be particularly good at linking their subject to careers, which is interesting. Presumably, that also comes back to an issue of training.

John Snell: Yes and no. To be fair, yes, if there was an element of training around career development for teachers at an early stage, that



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would be within their knowledge base to draw on. When you think about the value of the national curriculum in terms of knowledge content, it is not a small step to say, whatever subject you are teaching, but taking the example of doing area in maths, “Who knows of a job that might require someone to know the area of something?” You can start to have those conversations. History is a good example because you can easily do that. Some subjects are harder. I encourage my team to weave that language of jobs through their day-to-day work.

Similarly, I mentioned Primary Futures, but, if you have a subject you are teaching, there is a great portal on the site where you can type in a subject area and they have examples of careers that might link to that, because you do not know what you do not know. At a very simple level, if teachers are able to say, “Yes, someone who designs swimming pools might need perimeter”, you are just starting to apply value to the national curriculum. Again, I come back to that value point. For me, it is about the value of it, not just knowledge and building up knowledge.

Richard Hamer: Sir John Holman, at the National Science Learning Centre and STEM Learning, has done a lot of good work to help teachers teach STEM subjects and, to your point, John, apply that science understanding in a careers context both for secondary and primary. Building on things like that would be helpful. We also did some work—I must admit we stopped it over Covid—providing work experience placements, just a day, for teachers to come in and see what work is like and what apprenticeships and things are like, which is very powerful.

Q301 **Anna Firth:** I want to carry on with the theme of celebrating good practice. We have read about your fantastic—it certainly sounds fantastic—BAE Systems schools roadshow, which you are doing in primary schools. You are using theatre to bring engineering to life, which sounds particularly interesting.

I would like to give you the opportunity to tell us a bit more about that. What are the benefits and the challenges? How could it be scaled up? We know that you are doing that in 400 schools, and 100,000 young people have benefited. To be a national thing, this would have to be scaled up many times over. Is that realistic?

Richard Hamer: We put it at a certain size. It is primary and secondary. It is across the top end of primary and the bottom end of secondary. The Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy saw the benefits of what it does and came to work with us. The reason why we can afford to go to 420 schools, engage more than 100,000 and spend between us more than £500,000 a year is that we work together. That way you lower the unit cost of whatever you do.

The power of it is that combination with theatre. We have three actors and two teams. Two of them are female and one is male. They act as engineers in our organisations and bring to life a story in a curriculum context. This year it is about magnetism. Next year it is about space. The



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children know they are actors rather than employees of the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy or BAE Systems, but the purpose is the experience. They take them as being people from a company.

It is very powerful because it works both at the level of the mind, with the story we are telling, and as a piece of theatre. It has music and whatever so it is impactful as a story and connects with them in an emotional way. We have grown to have the three of us working together. I am sure there is scope to expand it further. That is more about more discussion and more dialogue. It certainly is powerful.

We see this as about changing misconceptions, raising visibility and showing what people do in unusual roles. That goes back to the example, as John was saying, of the florist or the construction site and what women do in our sectors that maybe challenges their mindsets about what girls can do in the future.

Q302 Anna Firth: I am sure you are doing this. It is like a longitudinal study. It is going to take quite some time to fully evaluate the impact of that programme. To what extent are you beginning on that work of evaluating its impact? Can you give us any concrete examples?

Richard Hamer: We aim it primarily at year 6 and 7 at small schools, but it can involve the whole school. If we go to a school in the Western Isles or whatever, the whole school will be there. We cannot keep individual records of the names of the children, but, by working with those schools, the evidence we can see is in meeting our requirements to recruit young people, apprentices and things like that.

We have done a big shift in terms of gender. If you go back 10 years, 5% of our apprentices were female; this year, in the 2022 cohort, just under 30% of our intake is female. Programmes like the schools roadshow, work experience, STEM ambassadors and using role models have shifted that change.

That is the evidence that we see and that is the reason why the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy piled in to get involved too. They could see that it would make a difference for them. Originally it was the diversity and inclusion team at the Royal Air Force that engaged with us around that. I gave a presentation at Business in the Community and I talked to other employers. That is how we got together.

Q303 Anna Firth: That fact alone is very interesting and makes it worthwhile. I would like to ask other people whether they would like to come in on any of these points.

Robert Peston: We work with older students, 14 to 18. Just to give you a sense of the range of the employers we work with, we work with the Bank of England, Spotify, Santander and the Royal Air Force. We do a lot of work with nurses through the NHS. We work with Tesco, UBS and Sky. These are our top partnerships.



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On data, in my own view it is bindingly obvious that these encounters are valuable, but we live in a world where it is very hard to persuade people without data. For example, we did a recent bit of work with YouGov, surveying a lot of young people between 18 and 30. There were a number of very interesting findings. We tried to adjust for socioeconomic factors and all sorts of other things. We think these benefits are due to work experience. We cannot be 100% certain, but the margin of error is now small.

One thing we discovered was that your chances of ending up NEET were much lower, if you had had multiple work experiences. Your average salary at the age of 30 was about 4% higher than it otherwise would have been, again adjusting for all sorts of other possible conditioning factors. Slightly depressingly, we discovered that you are more than twice as likely to have multiple work experiences if you go to an independent school than if you are in the state sector.

We can prove the benefit. Then, when it comes to cost, earlier you were asking me about rollout. We are doing some work with the Social Market Foundation—we are going to publish the results of that—about what a national programme of our sort, with an aspiration of making our kind of work experience available to everybody, would cost. We do not have a precise figure, but we know it is tens of millions, not hundreds of millions. Certainly, it is considerably less than £100 million, way less.

To put it into some kind of context, that is about an hour's worth of interest on the national debt at the moment. It is not, in the overall scale of things, a lot of money.

Q304 **Anna Firth:** I hear what you say, and I do not disagree about the blindingly obvious. You are talking from a charitable point of view, but when you want to unlock Government funding, taxpayers' funding, we have to have data to show it is worthwhile.

Robert Peston: That is why we do the research.

Q305 **Anna Firth:** Yes, exactly. The next thing I would like to ask about is co-creation of curriculum content when we are embedding careers in the curriculum. We have heard a lot of evidence about this. When you go around your constituency and you talk to tech and engineering companies, you often hear how the skills young people are coming out with do not align closely enough. This is a really key area.

Graeme, I know AET has done some innovative work with employers to co-create curriculum content. I would be very interested to know how that came about and how valuable that work is proving to be. Again, do you have some evidence of impact?

Graeme Napier: We delivered four pilot projects initially, and I will just talk about how those were set up. They were working with a single employer organisation and developing schemes of learning aligned to a core area of the curriculum. For example, we developed schemes of



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learning for students in years 7, 8, 9 and 10 in collaboration with Pinewood Studios. That was to teach maths to secondary school pupils.

The Careers and Enterprise Company brokered that relationship for us with the employer. That employer then met with senior members of staff from one of the schools within our trust to identify an aspect of the maths curriculum that we could then co-create with them.

There is a particular part of the GCSE curriculum that is usually taught in a very abstract way in the classroom; the topic is plans and elevations. With Pinewood Studios, we developed this scheme of learning sitting around teaching this maths concept to secondary school pupils. It is taught through recorded content that Pinewood Studios put together for us. Interestingly, this is probably an employer that might find it very difficult to offer work experience programmes, for example, on a live studio. We provided an insight into that organisation through the teaching of maths.

As I say, we developed those four schemes of learning. It also meant that this programme was delivered by specialist maths teachers. We are still delivering that core content. As a result of providing that sort of context, we found that engagement in that particular aspect of the curriculum increased dramatically for us, particularly for those students with additional needs or special educational needs. If I am teaching the plans and elevations of shapes, as soon as I start talking about movie sets or studios, engagement goes through the roof.

Q306 **Anna Firth:** That sounds absolutely fantastic, but I have the same question I had for Richard. Now you have that, is that example in a box so it can be spread out easily across the country?

Graeme Napier: It is. There were four projects like this. Pinewood was just one. There is a second with Tesco; there is a third with the National Trust, for example. Initially we published that across our trust and the schools within our trust to pilot that. Now that is available nationally through the Careers and Enterprise Company, which provides that platform for us to be able to spread it more widely. All of the content attached to those projects is freely available for schools.

Q307 **Anna Firth:** There is one last question from me because I know we need to move on. Are there any barriers that Government could help to take away in order to make this co-creation easier to do and easier to scale up?

Graeme Napier: I do not think there are significant barriers. Some of the challenges that exist are around the teams that develop these resources. We are in a fortunate position as a large national trust. We have curriculum teams that can give time to this and specialists who can develop these schemes of learning.

I can see that being more challenging in a standalone school. One barrier is about which individuals within multi-academy trusts or school



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organisations have the time, availability and expertise to be able to work alongside employees to develop them.

Anna Firth: That is very interesting.

Richard Hamer: There are educational charities or organisations, such as the Smallpeice Trust and its Coding Success programme. We work with them in the way you mentioned, Graeme. They are the experts on teaching. We can provide the example around coding and things like that. There are parties that can help support that other than purely the schools themselves.

John Snell: This is a really exciting conversation. In terms of getting resourcing provided into schools, the key thing for me is to make sure that whatever is provided is absolutely in line with the national curriculum and the statutory requirements, so it is not extra. There are really no more minutes left in the day, to be honest. If it is embedded well with links to the national curriculum, that gets buy-in and, in primary, will be quite easy to do.

Q308 **Ian Mearns:** Can I quote back something that you said, John? Earlier on in the discussion, you said, "The national curriculum will not prepare children for life". That quote resonated with me somewhat. How best can more schools and employers be supported to work together to link curriculum content to relevant careers and preparation for life?

John Snell: It comes back to my first point about the value that is attached to it. The knowledge is important. There is no doubt about that. The national curriculum provides that well, and it is in a good structure. There is a lot of content to get through. In its own right, that is not going to prepare them.

To your question, it is about what extra we do. It is about "what then", I suppose. It comes back to those opportunities and making it relevant to the national curriculum. If what you are teaching has relevance to young people, they are going to learn it better and remember it better, and it is going to have purpose in their lives.

One of the interesting things I am trying to work on at the moment is engaging families and young people more in this conversation. School cannot do it all. In fact, I will mention that we have designed a citizenship and character award, which has been a real success across the academy in terms of using curriculum links to enable parents to do things at home that are maybe relatively easy but also address some of the career elements of future jobs. I am always thinking about trying to provide the additional value the curriculum will not provide in its own right.

Robert Peston: I have been arguing for years that schools in general need to be thinking about the rapidly changing model of work much more than they have done in the last 15 years. Over the next 15 or 20 years, we will experience extraordinary changes to the structure of the



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economy, technology, our place in the world and all the rest of it. Jobs for life do not really exist anymore.

We need young people to be adaptable and to think about this, as well as schools, teachers and parents, who are the missing link in all of this. I completely agree with John that the engagement of parents is so important. It is about providing skills to young people that are—this is very hard—adaptable enough to make the most of changing opportunities. Unlike those of us who entered the world of work decades ago, it is no longer possible, on the whole, to say, “I am only going to do one thing for my entire life or work with one institution my entire life”.

While some of that can be done through the core academic curriculum, this is the reason I set this charity up in the first place. Different people have different views about whether independent schools are good or bad for the UK as a whole. That is not a political debate that one would want to get into here, but I would observe that some of the independent schools are remarkably powerful institutions in providing young people with the confidence and general skills that allow those young people to succeed.

With this charity, I wanted to look at where institutions of that sort work and try to encourage the state sector, inevitably with less money, to provide the kind of broad top-class approach to education we see there. It was about emulating success. This is a national mission. It is hard to think, in my own view, of a more important national mission. What we have been talking about today is a small piece of that.

Richard Hamer: We see it as integral to our business. In fact, although we are a science, engineering and manufacturing organisation, we are also a learning organisation. We cannot exist unless we change and we develop our people with the right skills now and for the future. That has to start with trying to enthuse young people about a lot of strange subjects like nuclear engineering, system engineering or even welding or being an electrician. We need to get them to understand what that means, what an apprenticeship means and things like that.

From a skills perspective, we need to work and we do work really effectively with schools, with people like John and Graeme, to influence young people in that way. Going back to that point around soft skills, we also take some of the content that we have, in terms of the training of our apprentices, into work experience and we help young people understand about teamwork, collaboration, presentation and all sorts of things. We used it again with Kickstart, which Caroline mentioned. We provided that training to them.

We know that we need soft skills training as well. It is a responsibility for us to meet our future skills needs, but we also see a responsibility as a good company to support our local communities with that.



Graeme Napier: No one would argue that the knowledge that sits within the national curriculum is not important. Really effective careers education can bring that to life and provide the context that that knowledge needs at times, so young people can see where it sits in the real world. In response to your question, it can bring the curriculum to life.

Q309 **Ian Mearns:** Robert, the written evidence provided by Speakers for Schools stated, “Young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds remain the cohort that doesn’t fully benefit from careers interventions”. Why is that and what needs to be done to address this? Conversely, you have already talked about the social experience and the social capital that youngsters in independent schools get by comparison.

Robert Peston: It is very depressing. A charity like ours is absolutely committed to targeting less advantaged children as much as we can. We use an algorithm that looks at the obvious factors such as free school meals, areas of deprivation and all the rest of it. Even with that, we are still disproportionately getting take-up from students who are more advantaged.

A lot of that, I am afraid, is to do with—we have talked a bit about it—the culture at home. A lot of it is particularly—this was very depressing when we moved more into the hybrid model—to do with whether you have access to IT, whether you are confident with it and all the rest of it.

Funnily enough, I was talking to my fellow trustees about this only yesterday. As a charity, we need to do more and better, but it is hard. To go back to the original point about why we were doing this and why I set it up, middle class parents were ringing me up and saying, “Take my kid”. The same applies within the school. It is the kids from those sorts of backgrounds where the parents are saying, “This will be good for you” who tend to be more enthusiastic.

Q310 **Ian Mearns:** That is the dilemma. What have been in the past called hard-to-reach groups are hard to reach.

Robert Peston: They are by definition hard to reach. I imagine John works very hard within a primary setting to make sure everybody within his school participates. If you have a school that has less resource and fewer committed individuals in that sense working in the school, it is harder.

Q311 **Chair:** I wonder whether part of that is about building careers and aspiration in from a very early stage, which certainly did not always used to be the case in terms of the focus put on this in education. It was often something that people came to once they were 16 and began to get a bit of careers advice at that stage. I wonder whether you feel that might make a difference over time.



Robert Peston: It certainly will make a difference over time. If all of this is embedded into the idea of what a school is all about, it will make a massive difference.

As so many students get their information from social media, we are in the process, for example, of recruiting a bunch of well-known people—it is the world we live in; it is a bit depressing, but people listen to celebrities and well-known people—to make short films about how work experience helped them. There is lots of promotional campaigning stuff we can do, but it is only a bit of the answer.

Richard Hamer: One of the most powerful things, as Robert has alluded to, is when young disadvantaged people themselves go back into schools and talk about things like Movement to Work or apprenticeships. It is about getting people from those schools who have done it.

Often it is about confidence. I have heard people saying that they could not get a job at BAE Systems. Then they see someone from a similar background—it might be a friend, a friend's friend or whatever—who has got a job. They think, "If she has done it, I can do it". It is about getting them, when they do work experience, to be with people who are similar to them. Building that trust and using role models is very important.

Robert Peston: Just very quickly on that point, in the separate speakers programme, this is something I have always encouraged our speakers to do as part of their presentation. In some cases they will have come from a disadvantaged background and they will talk about how they overcame the challenges in their own lives.

Even when they do not come from a disadvantaged background, we have all overcome challenges in our lives. Within the context of the conversation within the school, it is talking about the importance of ambition and the importance, when you see a challenge, of wanting to overcome it.

Ian Mearns: I am afraid to say it is probably 40 years since I first became a school governor. In every year I have been a school governor, I have talked to young people in schools about the importance of broadening their horizon and looking in different places. By applying themselves to their schoolwork, that also helps to broaden the horizon of opportunity that becomes available. I am sorry; that was a personal observation. I am not really here to do that.

Chair: You are allowed, though.

Q312 **Ian Mearns:** Richard, your Movement to Work initiative focuses on young unemployed people. What are the main barriers to work for this group and how can they best be overcome?

Richard Hamer: It goes back to your point earlier on, Ian: they are hard to reach. It is about getting out there and working with intermediaries,



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like the Prince's Trust and range of other charities or Jobcentre Plus. It is about getting to them so they want to get involved with us.

One of the models with the Prince's Trust and Movement to Work is using taster days. They come and meet us. It is almost an interview of us as much as an interview of them. It is about connecting us and them feeling confident.

Again, to Robert's point about young people coming to work experience and not wanting to do it, it is an opportunity when they come along and say, "I understand what it is about now". We are all guilty of using complex language or, I daresay, language they do not understand. They go along there, they meet other young people and they find out, "Yes, I would like to find out a bit more about welding or nuclear engineering", whatever it is. That is one of the successful things about it.

Then it is about running activities using work experience, where they are getting a real hands-on experience of what is. They know that at the end of it there is a job at BAE Systems—I know there are other people involved in it, many of whom are involved in Speakers for Schools, such as BT and Tesco—so there is something there to earn. They also know that the approach we take towards assessment is not just that final interview. We take on board all they have done. Sometimes these people come from neurodiverse backgrounds. I remember this from the first cohort.

Sometimes they are from a very disadvantaged background, but sometimes they are like, for example, the young person who got a first class degree in IT from Manchester University. I would imagine he was probably autistic or something like that. He just could never do a normal interview. He could not come here and talk. Give him coding and sit him in the background doing stuff, and he is fantastic. He is now employed by us and we are using his skills.

We need to be better at helping young people like that. We need to help them go through the interview process. In creating processes like interviews, as employers, we are guilty of creating artificial barriers for them. It is about giving them that work experience. Movement to Work has been fantastic. I will connect the Committee with Gillian Churchill at Movement to Work to find out more about it.

Nick Fletcher: "Disadvantage" is a word that seems to have followed me around this place. We talk about it an awful lot. I understand we have to use a word for it, but saying to young people, "You are disadvantaged" is the worst thing you can say to anybody.

This north-south divide that we continually talk about is setting people up to fail all the time. I just do not think that is the right thing to do. We have a role models programme. We do something similar to what you do, Robert. We get local employers in front of kids from all different backgrounds across my constituency. We do it for free. It is something I



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would encourage all MPs to do because MPs have a fantastic position. We can go into schools on a Friday usually or on a Monday morning before we come down here, and the next minute we are sat in front of a panel like yours.

We just need to be careful of language. One of the best things we could do to help would be for BAE Systems to build a plant in Doncaster. This is what it is. Everything is there, and we need things up here. The kids I see in my schools want to learn; they want to have fantastic careers. Unfortunately, all they do is sit on their iPads. That is what they do. They do not see it where they live.

There are an awful lot of fantastic opportunities in Doncaster and places in the north, but there could be more opportunities. As much as the work you are doing is fantastic, to level up and to give people in the north a chance we need those industries in the north. That is what we need.

Richard Hamer: We are fortunate to be able to have lots of our sites in the north. We continue to do that.

Nick Fletcher: We need more.

Mrs Drummond: That is your job.

Richard Hamer: I am conscious of language. We are talking here and we use words. It is difficult to know how to define stuff.

Nick Fletcher: It is. You are right.

Richard Hamer: We would not talk to young people in those terms. We would work through the schools, with the Prince's Trust and whatever to engage those groups. I quite agree we need to be sensitive.

Robert Peston: We would never put labels on anybody we worked with, in that sense. It is just the general phrase.

Nick Fletcher: It is all over this place, I am afraid. In everything you read, it is always there.

Chair: It is about targeting, is it not? "Levelling up" is another way of putting it. It is about how you target support to where it is most needed.

Ian Mearns: It is not about engaging with young people by talking to them about them being disadvantaged. We are talking in general terms here about what is happening out in the world, but you would not engage with young people on that basis.

Q313 **Anna Firth:** Very quickly, I just want to give Robert a word of encouragement. Would you agree with me, Robert, that, in the sphere of trying to enable good-quality careers advice, the internet could be our friend? Behind every successful work experience placement will have to be an introduction, and not all parents and children have access to people who are going to be able to give them good-quality work experience, but



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they will almost all have access to a screen. That introduction could be enabled on a screen.

I say this from some experience because during Covid I ran a social enterprise called the Invicta National Academy to provide catch-up lessons online when schools were shut. When we mapped where those lessons were being accessed from, they were pockets of deprivation because those parents wanted the children to do well and they had access to screens.

Robert Peston: There are fantastic opportunities in that sense. As you say, this is an area where there could really be tremendous democratisation.

There is another point I want to mention. I do not know whether the Committee is going to look at this because you have a very broad scope as it is, but I have, as many of us have, been slightly obsessing with AI recently. It is certainly within the wit of a central provider, Government, CEC or somebody, frankly, to harness AI in order to provide a careers advice service that would be a gazillion times better than what you can expect of any human individual, even when we are in that very good place of getting more expertise directly into schools.

It is something that we ought to be looking at now. I do not know whether any of you have used of any of these existing AI sites, but the quality of the way they just convert data and information into genuine advice is extraordinary. As a backup facility for the human intervention, it is something we should be looking at.

Chair: That is very interesting. That is another line of inquiry for us.

John Snell: I find the language of hard-to-reach families quite interesting. I always flip it around. It is not the families that are hard to reach; it is the agencies or the schools. In my mind, I always think of it that way round.

I just wanted to bring some hope and optimism. In my own school, 21% of my children are eligible for free school meals or people premium. Whenever we do our engagement with employers coming into the schools or, indeed, virtually, there is no difference in the improvement, if that is the right word, in terms of our pupil perceptions, whether they are disadvantaged or not. It is a level playing field.

From my experience, the volunteer programme that we are engaged in has an equitable benefit to it regardless. If that, as I understand it, is replicated across the country in that respect, that is a very easy but powerful way to ensure there is levelling up, if you want to consider that language. That is just my view from primary again.

Q314 **Kim Johnson:** Good morning. My question is to Robert. You started your information this morning by saying that Speakers for Schools was set up to end educational inequality, but we know that we have massive levels



of inequality. There are 4 million children living in poverty. They lack the social and cultural capital that their other peers have.

I wanted to ask you a question about black and other marginalised students, who we know do not have access to the same level of intervention. Your charity has done relatively well in engaging black students. I just wanted you to let us know how you have been able to do that, Robert.

Robert Peston: First of all, I never thought I would end inequality or educational inequality; I just wanted to make a contribution, if I possibly could. It is not rocket science. You do not want to stigmatise people by telling them they are disadvantaged, but you have to know where people need help, and then you have to devote your resources to it.

What is the most important thing you can do, more than anything else? If I go back to when I started back in 2008 and 2009, we did some trials of talks in those days. It was very interesting. We sent one rather distinguished, well-known economist—you would have all have heard of this person—into a pretty difficult, challenged school in east London. He talked to the students as though he was their mate and put on a forced cockney accent, and they had him for breakfast. They just thought, “You are a phony. We did not come here to be patronised”.

All the young people we work with are amazing. They ask challenging questions, whether it is in the work experience context or the inspirational talks. It is about mutual respect. Work experience works and our talks work when the students recognise that you are authentic, that you are not talking down to them, that you are genuinely trying to share your experience and that you are open to answer whatever questions they have.

Quite often the questions early on cause a slightly sharp intake of breath, to be frank. Quite often the question is, “How much do you earn?” You have to be up for that. It sounds trite, but honestly it is about mutual respect.

Q315 **Kim Johnson:** Black students will rarely see black professionals. I am a firm believer that you cannot be what you cannot see. Your charity is doing some great work. However, it is a very ad hoc experience for children across the country. Not everybody will have the opportunity to receive those opportunities that your charity is able to deliver.

Robert Peston: This is building on what Richard was saying earlier. When we have young people going into the workplace, it is incredibly important that they meet people who are a bit like them in whatever respect. We were talking a bit about the neurodiverse earlier. There are some businesses, for example, that are making a point of recruiting neurodiverse people. That in itself turns out to be a magnet for others, as it were.



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It is about shared experience. When it comes to the speakers programme, we try to have as broad and diverse a collection of speakers as we can. It is more art than science. As we were talking about earlier, whether it is in the workplace or when somebody goes into a school, the more someone finds points of connection, whether it is experience that they have had or background, not in a forced way but in a natural way, the better the outcomes appear to be.

I cannot pretend it is not a challenge. When we first started doing this stuff—it is not as bad as this in schools now—we were living through the tail end of the real “Big Brother”, reality TV and celebrity culture period. In lots of deprived schools, you would talk to headteachers about it and they would say, “The real problem is that we have lots of kids who think their only way out of here is to become a Premier League footballer or get on some celebrity TV programme”.

Because of the work of charities like ours and lots of others—to this very basic point that Ian made, which is that there is no substitute for passing your exams, knuckling down and making the most of yourself—the culture has changed in a very important and positive way, but there is still a bit of that left. Individuals do feel that somehow society has already written them off and their only way out of it is to be a brilliant footballer, when there is only a one-in-a-million chance.

Q316 Mrs Drummond: As you know, there is no register of children outside mainstream schools, which is something we are working on. Robert, you have set up a youth card for young people who are not in mainstream education. We just wanted to know whether we could have an update on it.

Robert Peston: The update is that we have shelved it, I am afraid. It is a very short update. It turned out that, for all sorts of reasons, which we can write you about if you are interested, the technical challenges of doing it were depleting our core activities. It was just depleting too much of our time and resource. We have not totally abandoned it, but it has been parked for a good year or so.

Mrs Drummond: It is impossible if you do not know where they are. A register would probably—

Robert Peston: There were just huge problems in getting the data we needed. There were all sorts of lines we did not want to cross. It is a challenge.

Chair: It is a really interesting space. Getting the data as to where people are and how they can be supported is so crucial.

Q317 Mrs Drummond: Richard, how do you engage? For instance, I know of a charity in Gosport that is educating young people who have completely gone out of mainstream education. They are doing boatbuilding and other types of engineering. Do you actively go out and work with these



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organisations and charities to help them, particularly to provide them with apprenticeships and things later?

Richard Hamer: Yes, we do. We work with the Prince's Trust, Movement to Work and things like that at a national and local level. We have a national education programme, which I am largely responsible for. At our sites and in our businesses, they will work with local organisations, schools and the people local schools connect us with. We do try to do that.

Q318 **Mrs Drummond:** These are not people in schools.

Richard Hamer: I know. Our work with Prince's Trust or whatever can help us. Certainly, with Movement to Work, we are engaging with DWP through JCP, but then the trust will reach out to people beyond that, in hard-to-reach groups, who are not signed up for benefits and unfortunately are not taking those things up. We try to do it that way.

Q319 **Caroline Ansell:** On your point around changing culture, this is the wildcard question when it comes to careers and the world of work. My understanding is that one study from 1997 said that over 40% of 15 and 16-year-olds were in the workplace; they had jobs. That has now more than halved. Is that part of the challenge we face?

Robert Peston: Yes. It must be, must it not?

Q320 **Caroline Ansell:** In addition to offering work experience, do we need to work with employers for them to offer work at younger years, then?

Richard Hamer: We are very fortunate. This year we have taken on 1,000 apprentices and 760 graduates.

Caroline Ansell: This is school-age children. This is pre that 16 mark. We are talking about 14, 15 and 16-year-olds, who were previously in the workforce. Nothing would prepare you more for the world of work than the actual experience of earning money and having to front up.

Robert Peston: I remember that I had my first job at 13, and they told me to lie about how old I was. We are a generation, on the whole, who just assumed we would have to pay our way at quite a young age. It is true that there is now a generation of all socioeconomic backgrounds for whom there are just not the jobs there at the moment. I do not know how you change that, but you are right. A bit of paid employment at a younger age would be no bad thing.

Chair: On that note, can I thank the panel? We have had some really inspirational examples today and some great feedback from you all. Thank you very much for your time.