Blueprint

**Virtual Experience
of the Workplace**

London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) Blueprints

Welcome to the LEAN Blueprints. We created our blueprints to help schools and businesses create effective opportunities for students to learn about careers. We've included suggestions and ideas for everything we think you'll need to plan and run successful and impactful careers projects.

With the restrictions in place due to COVID-19, traditional careers activities now need to be delivered virtually. In this Blueprint you'll see information on:

1. What is a virtual experience of the workplace?
2. What needs to be included?
3. How to run a virtual experience of the workplace with an example agenda.

What is a Virtual Experience of the Workplace?

Through the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#), schools and colleges across England have been asked to provide every student with at least one experience of the workplace between the ages of 11-16 and another between the ages of 16-18 (Gatsby Benchmark 6).

The impact of Covid-19 has meant that many schools and college will need to offer "virtual" experiences of the workplace this academic year. Typically, Gatsby Benchmark 6 has been delivered through a week-long work experience placement. There are clear benefits to this approach to work experience, notably around employability skills.

However, the Gatsby Benchmarks allow for alternative experiences of workplaces that are less time intensive and focus on giving students an insight into how a real workplace operates, the jobs that exist there and outlining how students can access those jobs. It is this type of experience that this blueprint focuses on.

What needs to be included

Whilst online engagement with employers can never completely substitute face-to-face experiences, the Careers & Enterprise Company have set out the following minimum requirements for a virtual experience of the workplace to count against the Gatsby Benchmarks during Covid-19 restrictions**:**

- Learning outcomes are defined, based on the age and needs of students
- Students meets a range of people from the workplace
- There is extensive two-way interaction between the students and the employees
- Students must perform a task or produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace and receive feedback on it from the employer

How to run a virtual experience of the workplace

1. Connect with a school or college

Our Enterprise Coordinators can connect you with a school or college who wants to run this activity. They will support an initial conversation between you and the lead teacher to agree on the structure of the event and allocate roles and responsibilities. Typically, this initial call would cover:

- Number of students taking part
- The activities on the day and who will lead them.
- Details about the students taking part i.e. age, ability, previous careers experiences

- Date/timings for the event
- Any additional requirements for the specific students taking part i.e. SEND needs
- The potential safeguarding risks and how they can be managed.

2. What to expect when delivering virtually – Our top tips

Under current Covid-19 restrictions you are likely to be presenting to students via an online video call, with the students grouped together watching you on a screen at the front of the classroom. Our top tips for delivering careers activities in this format are:

- Limit the time you spend speaking at the students (maximum 15 minutes at a time) to help them stay focused. Ask them questions to help break it up.
- Make the experience interactive by getting students to work on a range of activities – either individually or in groups.
- Involve their teacher in the planning so that they understand the activities and how they can support. They will also need to help manage behaviour.

3. What do you need to do for safeguarding?

Ask the lead teacher about their online safeguarding rules at an early stage as they can vary. In some cases, they may ask that:

- Their students are not on camera at anytime
- You present with your camera off throughout

- Students only ask questions via the teacher so they can moderate them first.

Whatever safeguarding measures they put in place, it is still possible to run a virtual experience of the workplace and our Enterprise Coordinators can help discuss solutions with you. It is also often helpful (but not essential) for you or your colleagues to have a DBS check to share with the school or college in advance.

4. Preparing the students

To ensure that students are able take part in the event properly, students should at a minimum understand what they will be doing and what will be expected of them in advance.
Additional preparation tasks can also help them make the most of the opportunity. For example, students can research your organisation online or reflect on what questions they want to ask in advance. The Careers & Enterprise Company's Making it meaningful checklist provides helpful guidance to schools and colleges on this.

5. What the agenda could look like

Agree clear learning outcomes with the lead teacher that align to their wider careers programme and design the agenda around them. The Career Development Institute framework or the Skills Builder Universal Framework give example learning outcomes that can be used.

Design the agenda to be interactive and fast paced, with a variety of activities for students to take part in. We recommend that a virtual experience of the workplace contains at least 2-3 hours of activity. This can be delivered in a single half-day block or over a series of lessons within student's normal timetable.

See our example agenda at the end of this blueprint.

6. Using pre-recorded videos

You can complement live elements with pre-recorded videos that teachers can view in advance to allay concerns around safeguarding. Tours of your workplace, talking heads with staff members who can't support a live interaction, or a promotional overview of your business can all be useful pre-recorded additions to your virtual experience of the workplace.

There are also many pre-recorded careers videos online that can be easily used, including:

- The Career & Enterprise Company's My Week of Work and My Choices resources.
- Learn Live's series of sector talks that can be used to give students additional information on your industry.
- iCould's series of interviews with business volunteers