

# The Student Voice.

Perspectives and insights on work  
experience events

**2024 survey report**

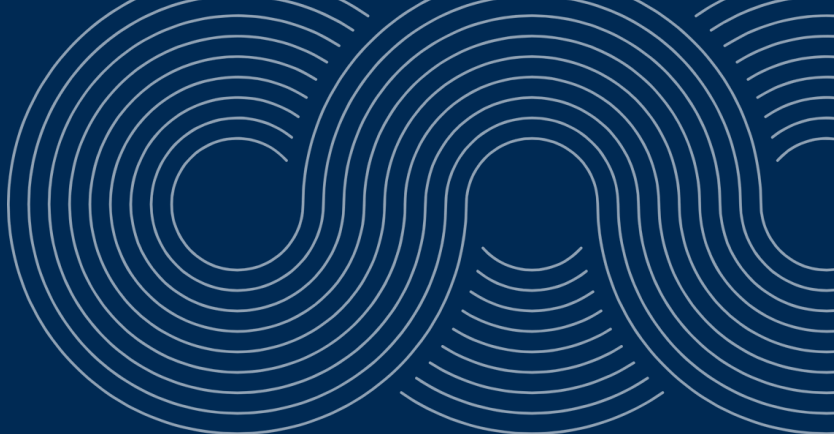


**Uptree**

In partnership with

**Bridge  
Group  
research  
action  
equality**

# Table of contents.



## Section

1	<u>Foreword</u> .....	01
	<u>Executive summary</u> .....	02
	<u>Student network overview</u> .....	03
2	<u>Highlights of work experience events</u> .....	05
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	06
	<u>Value of work experience events</u> .....	07
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	08
	<u>Quotes and insights</u> .....	09
3	<u>The ideal work experience event</u> .....	10
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	11
	<u>Barriers to attending work experience events</u> .....	12
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	13
4	<u>Sense of belonging</u> .....	14
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	15
	<u>Plans for the future</u> .....	16
	<u>Demographic difference</u> .....	17
5	<u>Employer tips</u> .....	18
	<u>Looking forward</u> .....	20
	<u>Thank you</u> .....	21



# An introduction to Uptree

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We believe that every young person should have access and opportunity to progress their career based on their talent and potential (not their connection or background).

Uptree was founded to put an end to inequality of opportunity, where no young person is left behind on their journey from education to employment. Our mission is to be the leading platform providing young people with free careers education and experiences of work to drive equality of opportunity for all.

Our Education Team targets schools and students that need our support the most. Uptree work experience provides young people with opportunities to spend one day or multiple days at a company, discovering working life and the career opportunities available to them.



## CEO message

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Our central emphasis lies on the crucial role of work experience in the Early Careers and Diversity and Inclusion landscape. With projections suggesting a potential slowdown in hiring growth in 2024, it's imperative not to overlook young people's avenues for career advancement to achieve an inclusive and skilled future workforce.

This report underscores the significance of employer-led experience of work in shaping the professional development of young individuals. As we navigate this terrain, we acknowledge challenges such as travel costs, emphasising the urgency for more accessible and inclusive opportunities within the Early Careers space whilst young people are still in education.

**Tamsin Dewhurst**

Uptree Founder and CEO



# Executive summary 2024

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In today's dynamic career landscape, understanding the evolving needs and aspirations of young individuals is crucial for shaping the future of Early Careers and employer-led work experience events.

This report is an exploration of the world of work experience, seen through the eyes of young people. Developed in partnership with the **Bridge Group**, a non-profit consultancy that utilises research to promote social equality, the report delves into young people's aspirations, the value they found in work experience events and standout moments. Demographic details will follow each section for transparency, enhancing understanding of the diverse perspectives shaping our findings.

Our findings spotlight the significance of work-focused experience for young people, emphasising its role as a driver for learning about diverse careers and engaging with professionals. It is evident that Uptree's work experience events, valued by over 80% of participants, play a pivotal role in providing unique and valuable career experiences.

However, our findings also underscore the importance of inclusivity when designing Early Careers programmes. By recognising the diverse experiences and opinions of our participants, we stress the importance of tailoring initiatives to meet the varied needs of the next generation. The survey draws attention to potential barriers, such as travel costs, which can pose challenges for many young individuals.

Our report suggests a strategic focus on inclusivity and collaboration. By understanding the nuanced preferences of young talent, employers can co-create more meaningful and impactful Early Careers programmes. This approach not only empowers the next generation but also ensures that these initiatives remain accessible to a wide spectrum of talent.

We also offer practical guidance for employers to help the development of their initiatives so young people can be given the best possible experience to help them thrive in their future careers.

# Student network overview 2024

**615** young people aged 16-21 took part in the 2024 survey.

**38%** from Asian or Asian British

**25%** from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

**24%** from White/White British

**59%** female/ **39%** male/ **2%** self identify

**63%** London or South East

**10%** East of England

**9%** North West

**<1%** Other Regions

## Students planning their futures

**40%** university, **25%** apprenticeship

**5%** job, **1%** own business/Higher National Diploma/not sure



## Our diverse student network.

**285,000+** student reach

**23%** in receipt of Free School Meal (6 year average)

**84,000+** registrations on our careers platform

**66%** from minority ethnic backgrounds

**680+** partner schools

**53%** female

# Perspectives and insights on work experience events.

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## Uptree work experience survey

Data analysis and presentation by the Bridge Group.  
Summaries, conclusions and recommendations written by Uptree.

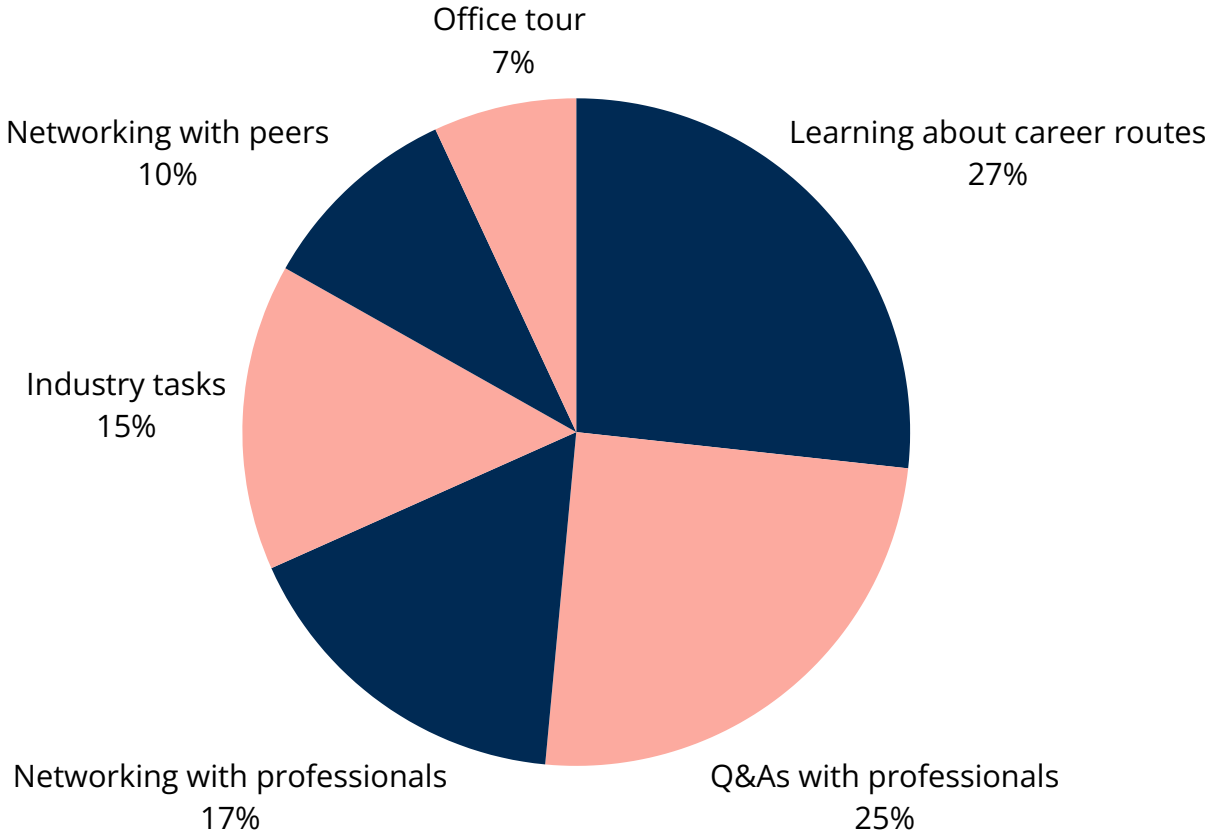
# Highlights of work experience events.

## Young people's highlights of their work experience events.

When asked about the most memorable aspects of the events they attended, **27%** of the people that answered the survey pointed to learning about career routes, while **25%** said engaging in Q&A sessions with professionals at the company was their highlight. In contrast, only **7%** mentioned the 'office tour' as a stand out experience.



Highlights of work experience events



# Demographic differences.

Examining young people's highlights of work experience through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Ethnicity

Individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds shared their thoughts on the aspects that left a lasting impression:

### 1. **Networking with peers was selected as a highlight by:**

10-12% in non-White ethnic groups  
5% in White/White British group

### 2. **Office tour was selected as a highlight by:**

Black/African/Caribbean/  
Black British: 11%  
White/White British: 6%  
Asian/Asian British: 6%

## 02 | Gender

Female respondents were slightly more inclined (**28%**) to highlight 'learning about career routes' compared to their male counterparts (**24%**).



**A higher percentage of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds find value in 'networking with peers' compared to their White/White British counterparts.**

## 03 | Disability

Respondents with a disability were more likely to value 'industry tasks' (**22%**) compared to those without a disability (**14%**).

## 04 | Summary

These insights highlight the nuanced preferences among different demographic groups. Whether it's finding value in 'networking with peers' or seeing the 'office tour' as a highlight, the data underscores the diversity of experiences based on the differences of individuals.



# Value of work experience events.

## Aspects of employer events that young people found the most valuable.

The survey revealed positive feedback regarding our work experience events, with the majority gaining insights and information that they couldn't have got from friends, family, school or elsewhere.



## Responses on whether events through Uptree provided young people with information that they could not have got from friends, family, school or elsewhere.



Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

# Demographic differences.

Examining what young people value about work experience events through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Gender

Female respondents showed a slightly higher inclination to agree or strongly agree that the experience was valuable (**89%**), in contrast to male respondents (**84%**).

At the same time, male respondents tended to feel more neutral about the experience (**14%**), surpassing the **8%** of female respondents choosing this option.

## 02 | Disability

**76%** of respondents with a disability agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, representing a lower proportion compared to the overall sample (**86%**).

A higher percentage of respondents with a disability (**16%**) expressed neutrality about the statement, surpassing the overall sample's neutral response rate (**11%**).



**The findings showcase that the majority (86%) felt they gained experience and information through these events that they couldn't have got from friends, family, school or elsewhere.**

## 03 | Ethnicity

Across all ethnic groups, over **86%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that work experience events were valuable and provided unique information not attainable from other sources.

## 04 | Summary

The data shows that the majority found work experience events valuable, but attention should be given to inclusivity. Individuals with disabilities may have diverse perspectives, warranting tailored support. Employers should engage all groups effectively and address any distinct needs or perceptions during their experience.

A photograph of three young men in a meeting. One man in the center is wearing glasses and smiling. Another man to his left is looking at him. A third man is partially visible on the right, looking towards the center. The background is a blurred office setting with a computer monitor.

# Quotes and insights.

Participants were asked why they found the experience events valuable.

## ✓ 01| Gained knowledge of job/career/employer/industry

"It allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding of the world of finance and how big firms consult their customers."

"Work experience was valuable to me as my college does not offer enough opportunities tailored to my goals, such as cybersecurity and tech. Without Uptree I would still be inexperienced and possibly never would've deepened my interest in tech."

## ✓ 02| Networking/making contacts

"It allowed me to gain an insight of what careers are available in banking and I was able to professionally network and ask questions to the employees at the firm."

"I visited a company's office for the first time, spoke to employees about their jobs and I could do real tasks."

## ✓ 03| Gained skills specific to chosen career

"Helped me to gain skills and knowledge related to my future career."

"It helped improve my basic skills and allowed me to gain a lot of knowledge about the profession that I want to pursue."

# The ideal work experience event.

## Young people's desired work experience elements.

The respondents expressed a range of preferences for their ideal work experience, with many wanting company insights, information on job support and practical guidance on applications. The analysis uncovered demographic variations, including differences based on gender, disability status and ethnicity.



## What young people want from work experience events.



# Demographic differences.

Examining what respondents want from work experience events through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Ethnicity

Preferences varied across ethnic groups, most notably:

**18%** of White/White British compared to **11%** of Asian/Asian British respondents are interested in what careers at the company entail.

**3%** of Black/African/Caribbean /Black British in contrast with **7%** of Asian/Asian British respondents want insights on whether the organisation is driven by its values.

## 02 | Gender

Those who did not identify as male or female had a notably high preference (**18%**) of wanting to understand if creativity and innovation is encouraged. This percentage is twice as high as those who identified as female or male (**9%** for both).



**A higher proportion (26%) from London and the South East were interested to know whether creativity and innovation is encouraged within the organisation, surpassing the 19% reported by respondents from the rest of the UK.**

## 03 | Disability

Disaggregating responses by declared disability revealed minimal differences between the two groups, with little variation in their most popular choices.

## 04 | Summary

The data suggests that Early Careers employers should consider how they can showcase different elements of their business and career pathways to suit the diverse interests and needs of young people.

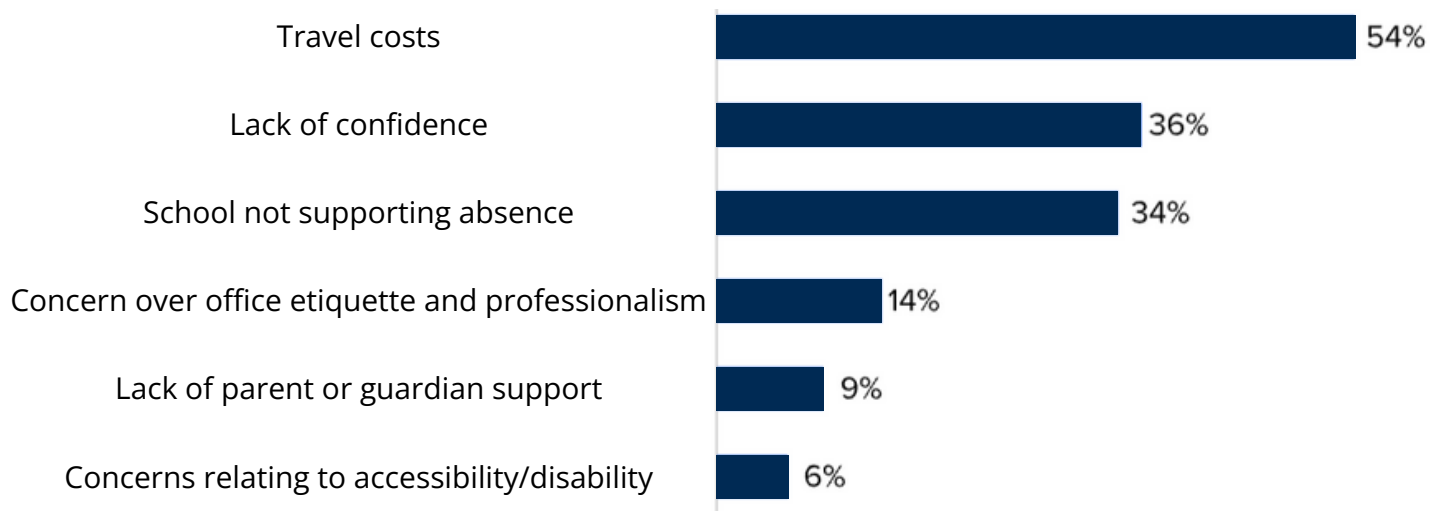
# Barriers to attending work experience events.

Respondents were asked to identify any factors that may have prevented them from attending a work experience event.

The primary concern for over half (**54%**) was 'travel costs,' followed by 'lack of confidence' (**36%**). Addressing these could be pivotal in enhancing overall participation rates.



## Barriers to attending employer work experience events.



# Demographic differences.

Examining barriers through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Ethnicity

**Lack of confidence:** Among White/White British respondents, nearly one-third (**29%**) cited this reason, while only **20%** of Asian/Asian British respondents expressed the same concern.

**School not supporting absence:** White/White British respondents (**17%**) were less likely to choose this reason compared to those from most other ethnicities (**27%**).

## 02 | Disability

**Concerns relating to accessibility/disability:** **10%** of respondents with a disability selected this reason, while only **2%** without a disability did.

**Travel costs:** Conversely, those without a disability (**38%**) were more likely to select 'travel costs' compared to those with a disability (**21%**).



**'Travel costs' were cited by 62% of respondents from the rest of the UK compared with 49% from London and the South East.**

## 03 | Gender

**Travel costs:** this concern was more prevalent among males, with **40%** highlighting it as a barrier. In contrast, **34%** of females selected this reason for non-attendance.

## 04 | Summary

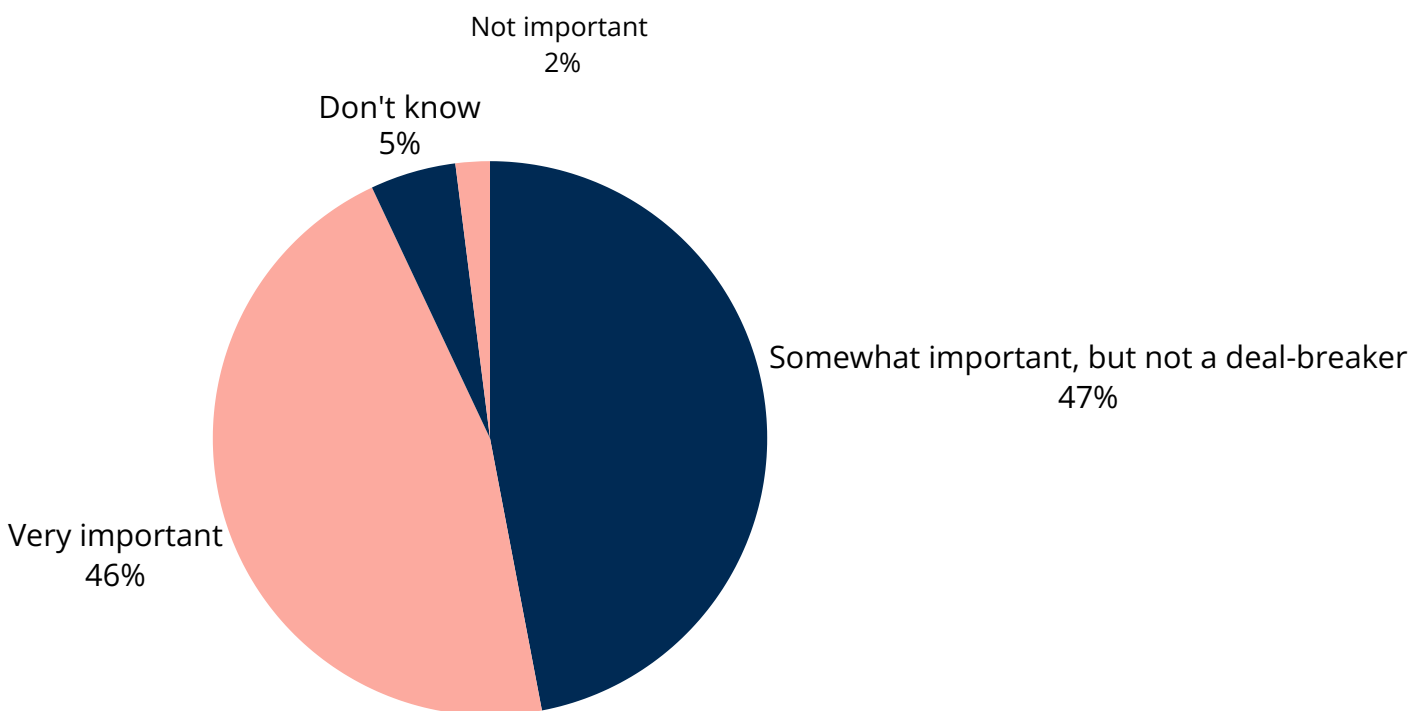
The data suggests the importance of addressing the diverse barriers faced by young people. Whether related to confidence, school commitments or travel costs, steps should be taken to acknowledge and support these students where possible to encourage event attendance.

# Sense of belonging.

This section explores how the need for belonging influences young individuals' career considerations. For almost half of the respondents (**46%**), feeling a sense of belonging is crucial when thinking about their careers. Another **47%** see it as somewhat important, though not a deal-breaker. Only **2%** do not consider it as an important factor at all.



## Respondents' views on the importance of workplace belonging.







# Demographic differences.

Examining the importance of belonging reported by respondents through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Ethnicity

Across all ethnic backgrounds, the majority (**87%**) in each group expressed that a sense of belonging at work held either 'very important' or 'somewhat important' significance.

## 02 | Disability

**Respondents with a disability:** A substantial **61%** considered a sense of belonging at work as 'very important.'

**Respondents without a disability:** Notably, **45%** still acknowledged the importance of belonging at work, indicating a nuanced perspective among those without a disability.

## 04 | Summary

The data suggests that fostering a sense of belonging at work is crucial. This importance is consistently recognised across various demographic groups, particularly those with disabilities.



I gained new opportunities and discovered more potential in myself that I didn't even know I had.

## 03 | Gender

**95%** of the respondents who are female found a sense of belonging at work 'very important' or 'somewhat important.'

**89%** of respondents who are male shared the same opinion.

# Plans for the future.

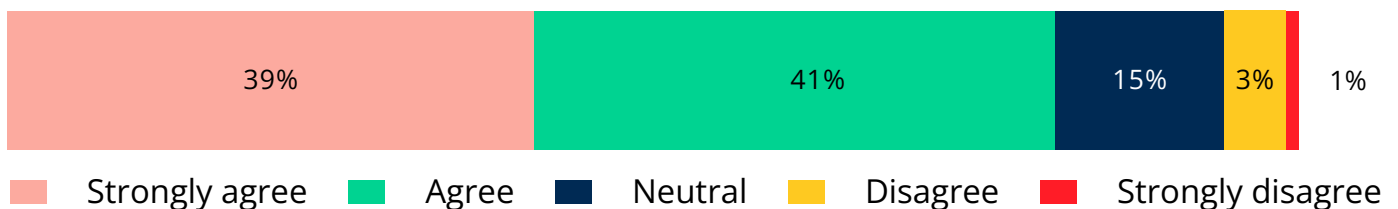
In the final section of our report, we explore how work experience events shape post-school options for respondents. A substantial **80%** agreed or strongly agreed that work experience played a significant role, as depicted in the graph below.

## Future plans

In free-text responses, the people answering shared their future plans. The majority mentioned university or apprenticeships (**40%** and **25%** respectively). Some respondents articulated specific paths, outlining courses or specific jobs and apprenticeships they intend to pursue.



## Responses on whether work experience events influenced post-school choices.





# Demographic differences.

Examining the future plans of respondents through a demographic lens, specifically focusing on protected characteristics, uncovers notable distinctions:

## 01 | Ethnicity and gender

When combining 'agree' and 'strongly agree,' no significant differences emerged based on gender, ethnicity or region of residence. Yet, variations existed in the proportion selecting 'agree' and 'strongly agree' among specific groups. Notably, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and male respondents leaned towards agreement, while other ethnicities and females were more inclined to strongly agree.

## 02 | Disability

There was a tendency toward more **neutral** or **negative** responses among those indicating a disability. However, the limited numbers prevent drawing conclusive insights.

## 03 | Summary

The data suggests that work experience significantly influences post-school options for most participants. Employers should use this opportunity to provide young people with a comprehensive insight into the world of work, ensuring that the choices they make are well-informed.

# Employer guidance.

## Focus on career routes and networking sessions

Develop in-depth programmes that offer insights into various career routes. You can create informational materials that outline various career paths, providing detailed insights into the day-to-day responsibilities and growth opportunities.

Establish platforms for professionals and young people to engage in Q&A sessions. You can also organise regular industry-specific panel discussions or webinars where participants can actively engage with professionals.



## Customise experiences for diverse career interests

Tailor work experience initiatives to cater to diverse career interests, responding to the specific needs found among our respondents, especially in fields like finance, technology and cybersecurity. You can offer hands-on projects and tasks that align with these interests, providing a practical and immersive learning experience.





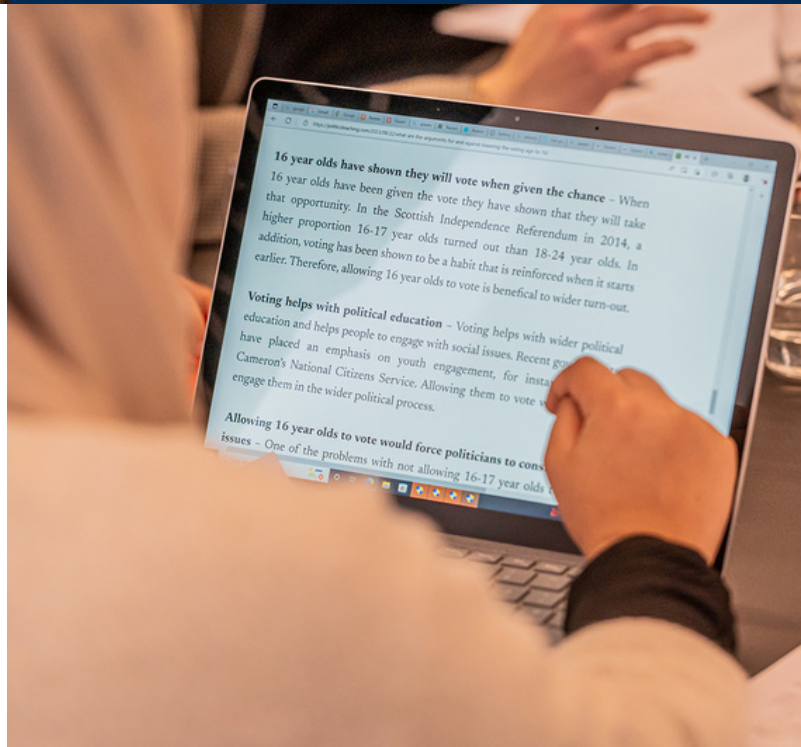
## Focus on skills development

Structure your programmes to actively cultivate skills relevant to participants' chosen careers, providing hands-on experiences that contribute tangibly to their professional growth. You can implement skill-building workshops during an employer insight event, focusing on both general and industry-specific skills.

## Address accessibility and confidence barriers

Introduce virtual work experience events, ensuring accessibility for participants regardless of location.

Provide written information or share resources with students through pre-event emails to familiarise young people with the format and content, boosting their confidence in participating effectively. Some young people will struggle to cover travel costs for in-person events, so consider paying these to encourage attendance.



## Promote an inclusive company culture

Showcase diversity and inclusion initiatives through dedicated sessions or materials, emphasising the organisation's commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace. Integrate participants into company culture by organising virtual office tours, team introductions, interactive cultural events or creating career lessons.



# Looking forward 2024

In a landscape where experience of work is acknowledged as a critical factor, especially for young individuals lacking professional connections, our report serves as an insightful exploration into what constitutes a genuinely valuable experience for the younger generation.

Our survey, featuring responses from **615** young people, sheds light on their aspirations, the perceived value of work experience events, standout moments and relevant demographic information. The majority, a significant 86%, found Uptree's work experience events valuable, emphasising the impact of these initiatives on the younger generation.

Work experience events offered by Uptree played a pivotal role in shaping the positive experiences of these young individuals. Learning about career routes and engaging with professionals emerged as key highlights in supporting their development.

Their desire for insight into training (**44%**) and practical job application guidance (**41%**) underscores the demand for hands-on, applicable knowledge.

A substantial **54%** reported that 'travel costs' are a barrier to accessing the events. Notably, this challenge was more prevalent for those outside London and the South East, highlighting the need to address geographical disparities.

Uptree, through its commitment to providing valuable career experiences, is positioned to address these findings. Our work experience events directly respond to the aspirations and some of the challenges expressed by young individuals in this survey. By recognising the importance of inclusivity and practical guidance, Uptree remains dedicated to shaping meaningful Early Careers programmes that empower the next generation. We look forward to working with employers across the UK in 2024 to support even more young people.

# Thank you.

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