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## **Blueprint**

**Virtual Experience  
of the Workplace**

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## 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

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## 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.

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## 4. Preparing the students

To ensure that students are able to 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

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## 7. Setting a challenge and providing feedback to the students

To meet Gatsby Benchmark 6 your virtual experience of a workplace must ask students to perform or produce a piece of work relevant to your workplace.

There are a wide range of tasks that could be suitable. Discuss ideas and the way feedback will be provided with the lead teacher so they can ensure it is appropriate for their students.

### Example tasks based on your workplace

- Listening to a customer complaint and writing a formal letter to them to apologise
- Creating a presentation on how your business can improve their social media presence
- Researching your key competitors and summarising how they compare
- Creating a presentation on how your organisation can advertise its job roles to young people
- Designing a new futuristic school and pitching their design to a panel
- Watching a recorded meeting and creating meeting notes on key points

### Example challenges based on relevant skills (see [Skillsbuilder framework](#))

- Speaking - Preparing for and taking part in a debate on issues that relate to your sector.
- Listening – Listening to 3 conflicting speeches and summarising the issue into a briefing for their manager
- Creativity – Create a new product and outline an advertising campaign for it
- Problem solving - Setting out a difficult professional scenario, planning their response and then role-playing it in pairs.

### Employability Tasks

- Self-reflection tasks on their skills and strengths and what roles they could do
- Writing an application or CV for a specific job description at your company
- Mini interviews for a job at your organisation
- Group assessment tasks you may use for entry-level recruitment

They must also receive feedback from you on their work, either as an individual or in a small group. This can be written or verbal, in-person or pre-recorded. What's important is that the student learns what they did well and how they could improve.

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## 8. Collect feedback

Collect feedback from everyone taking part in the event. This is important as schools/colleges are now asked to provide evidence of the impact careers activities have on the students taking part.

Take a look at The Careers & Enterprise Company's [example evaluations](#) for students, parents and school staff and employer volunteers.

### Example virtual employer insight agenda

#### Session 1: Introducing your organisation & a virtual tour (1 hour)

Example Learning outcomes:

- Students can give examples of different business organisational structures, how they operate and how they measure success.
- Students can give examples of different kinds of work and why people's satisfaction with their working lives can change
- Students can provide different explanations of what careers are, how they can be developed and can discuss the skills involved in managing your own career

Time allocated	Activity	Lead
5 mins	Welcome and setting expectations	Teacher/lead employee
10 mins	Company overview – Outlining the organisation's purpose and structure	Lead employee or senior employee
15 mins	Virtual office tour with input from different roles/departments.	Pre recorded
10 mins	Student preparation – tell the students who they are about to meet and give them 10 minutes to think about what questions they might want to ask.	Teacher
20 mins	Q&A session with a range of employees from your workplace – students should be able to questions in the chat or directly.	Company employee/s
5 mins	Ask students to reflect on what they've learned so far and outline what's next	Teacher/lead employee

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## Session 2: The Enterprise Challenge (1 to 2 hours)

Example Learning outcomes:

- Students can recognise the qualities and skills they have demonstrated both in and out of school that will help to make them employable
- Students can recognise when they are using qualities and skills that entrepreneurs demonstrate

Time Allocated	Activity	Lead
10 mins	Warm up task – For example <a href="#">student bingo</a> from our Explore Your Horizons event.	Teacher
10 mins	Introduce the challenge or task  Outline the task to the students, emphasising how the task is relevant to your place of work. Ideally the task should be an authentic (but simplified) example of the type of tasks employees at your organisation undertake.	Lead employee – live or pre-recorded. Or teacher reading a script
Dependent on the task - typically between 30 minutes and 1 hour.	Your employer challenge  Students produce a piece of work to receive feedback on this individually or in small groups. This could include creating a presentation, conducting a debate, writing an email or letter, making a speech, designing a project etc.	Lead employee and teacher.
N/A	Employer provides feedback – this should have some personalisation for each individual, even if the task was performed in a group. Create a short-standardised way of providing feedback so all students have something to reflect on.  This could be feedback provided in real-time (i.e. after each group presents) or could be completed over a longer period (i.e. feedback provided on recorded presentations or written tasks if the event is run over multiple weeks).	Lead employee and teacher.
10 minutes	Debrief and student reflection on what they did well, how they could have improved and what they have learned.	Teacher

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## Session 3: Feedback and Career Pathways (duration 30 mins to 1 hour)

Example Learning outcomes:

- Students can explain how they are benefitting as a learner from careers, employability and enterprise activities and experiences
- Students can explain how work and working life is changing and how this may impact on your own and other people's career satisfaction
- Students are be able to research their education, training, apprenticeship, employment and volunteering options including information about the best progression pathways through to specific goals

Time Allocated	Activity	Lead
10 minutes	Future of the industry – lead employee summarises how the industry is changing and what it may look like in the future	Lead employee
10-20 mins	Career pathways in this industry – Overview of apprenticeships, entry level roles, graduate entry, school leaver programmes etc. Use local labour market information where possible and signpost to where they can conduct their own research.	Lead Employee
5 mins	Final Q&A session with Lead employee	Teacher and Lead Employee
5 minutes	Collect feedback and thank you's	Teacher



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## LEAN Blueprints

Don't forget about our other blueprints available at [www.london.gov.uk/LEAN](http://www.london.gov.uk/LEAN):

### **Gatsby Benchmark 5 blueprints** (for schools)

- Speed Networking Event
- Professional Interview Day
- Speaker Series

### **Gatsby Benchmark 6 blueprints** (for employers)

- Employer Insight Visit
- Work Experience

If you have any ideas on how we can improve these blueprints, please contact [enterpriseadvisers@london.gov.uk](mailto:enterpriseadvisers@london.gov.uk)