

# STRENGTHENING WORK EXPERIENCE

A CDI Workshop on Meaningful and Varied Encounters  
Aligning with Gatsby Benchmark 6 and New Work  
Experience Policies

Please see - [Statutory careers guidance](#)

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# WORKSHOP AIMS

- Understand the strengthened requirements for Gatsby Benchmark 6
- Explore what 'meaningful and varied' workplace experiences look like
- Share practical strategies for implementation in schools and colleges
- Align work experience with government policy and the work experience guarantee





# BM6 - Ice Breaker

- What was the old short reference for BM6?
- What is the new one?
- What is the change?
- Hint – it's only a tiny minuscule but **SIGNIFICANT** change.



# The Difference



EDUCATION

EDUCATION HOME ABOUT FOCUS AREAS PROGRAMMES REPORTS GALLERY LATEST

HOME > EDUCATION > LATEST > GUIDANCE ON ONLINE ENCOUNTERS FOR GATSBY BENCHMARKS 5 AND 6

## GUIDANCE ON ONLINE ENCOUNTERS FOR GATSBY BENCHMARKS 5 AND 6

8 JUNE 2020 • SIR JOHN HOLMAN, AUTHOR OF THE GOOD CAREER GUIDANCE REPORT

Online encounters and experiences that take place between students and employers are happening to a greater extent than ever before due to the Covid-19 pandemic, while face-to-face contact is not possible. The current focus on digital solutions has prompted questions about which online activities count as a meaningful encounter with employers (Gatsby Benchmark 5) and workplace experiences (Gatsby Benchmark 6). The Careers & Enterprise Company and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation have listened to the experiences of schools, colleges and others in the careers community and have used this early learning to provide initial guidance to Careers Leaders. Sir John Holman, author of the report that laid out the Benchmarks writes here about how this guidance stays true to the ethos of the report.



<https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk/guide-to-gatsby-benchmark-6/>

JS Software -... McAfee LiveSafe Banks Businesses 7CC Courses Careers Role HR Jobs Movies News Holidays

A guide to

## Gatsby Benchmark 6

Experiences of workplaces

For Schools

For Colleges and ITPs



# Why Strengthen Work Experience?



- Enhances skills, confidence, and career readiness
- Broadens exposure to a variety of career paths
- Enables informed choices aligned to interests and labour market needs



- Supports social mobility and equity of access
- Youth disconnection from real-world work
- Statutory pressure (2-week guarantee, Gatsby 6/BM6)
- Equity gaps & employer engagement challenges

# What's New? (Updated May 2025)

To make **Gatsby Benchmark 6: Experiences of Workplaces meaningful**, schools must move beyond superficial activities and deliver structured, purposeful engagements that **meet all the criteria outlined in the updated May 2025 statutory guidance**.



**Multiple, meaningful experiences by age 16**



**At least one further experience by age 18**



**Government guarantee: 2 weeks' WORTH of work experience (KS3 & KS4)**



**Focus on flexibility, inclusivity, and progression**



GATSBY

# What's New? – Key Definitions from Gatsby Benchmark 6 Guidance (2025)



**WORTH:** Equivalent in value and duration to two full weeks of structured, purposeful engagement in workplace activities. The focus is on substance and learning outcomes, not just the time logged. Think of it as 10 days if that helps.



**MULTIPLE:** More than one distinct experience. Should offer students repeated exposure across time, settings, or roles to deepen understanding.



**VARIED:** Diverse in type, industry, or format. May include visits, shadowing, placements, or virtual encounters across different sectors or job functions.



**SKILLS:** Practical and personal abilities valued in the workplace—e.g. teamwork, communication, time management, problem-solving, adaptability.



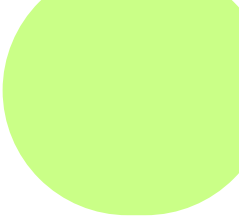
**MEANINGFUL:** Purposeful, structured, and impactful. Includes two-way interaction, tasks, feedback from employers, and student reflection. – Lets delve deeper in the next slide.



**Difference between  
MUST and SHOULD?**

**Focus on flexibility,  
inclusivity, and  
progression**





# Align with the DfE’s Definition of a ‘Meaningful Experience’



The guidance says a meaningful experience must

Requirement	What to Do in Practice
Have a clear purpose	Define learning objectives and share them with students and employers (e.g. equalex LO, launch 16th)
Be underpinned by learning outcomes	Tailor activities to skills development (e.g. teamwork, communication, industry awareness)
Include two-way interaction	Ensure students speak with staff, ask questions, and engage—not just observe
Offer a range of people	Involve multiple professionals with different roles and career journeys
Include a task or real output	Let students create something: presentation, pitch, proposal, or reflection
Provide feedback from the employer	Give students structured feedback on their effort, behaviour, or learning
Include student reflection	Plan time for students to reflect on skills gained and insights learned





# From Policy to Practice

- The updated careers guidance provides the **'WHAT'**.
- The PERE Model and Workplaces Experiences That Work provide the **'HOW'**.
- These frameworks translate the Gatsby Benchmark 6 and the government's guarantee into structured, scalable, and inclusive practices.
- The **WHAT** is clear. Let's now unlock the **"HOW"**.
- **Bridge to PERE Model**



# Introducing the PERE Model

Aligned with Gatsby Benchmark 6, ensures consistency and supports quality assurance.

A structured framework for delivering meaningful work experience:

**P – Prepare:** Set expectations, assess readiness, conduct pre-experience-surveys, set goals, brief students, employers, educators and parents

**E – Execute:** Facilitate meaningful, task-based engagement. Supervision as students engage in real-world tasks or assignments, which provide two-way interactions

**R – Reflect:** Guided reflections, learning journals, post-experience-surveys. Encourage personal insight and feedback from ALL stakeholders

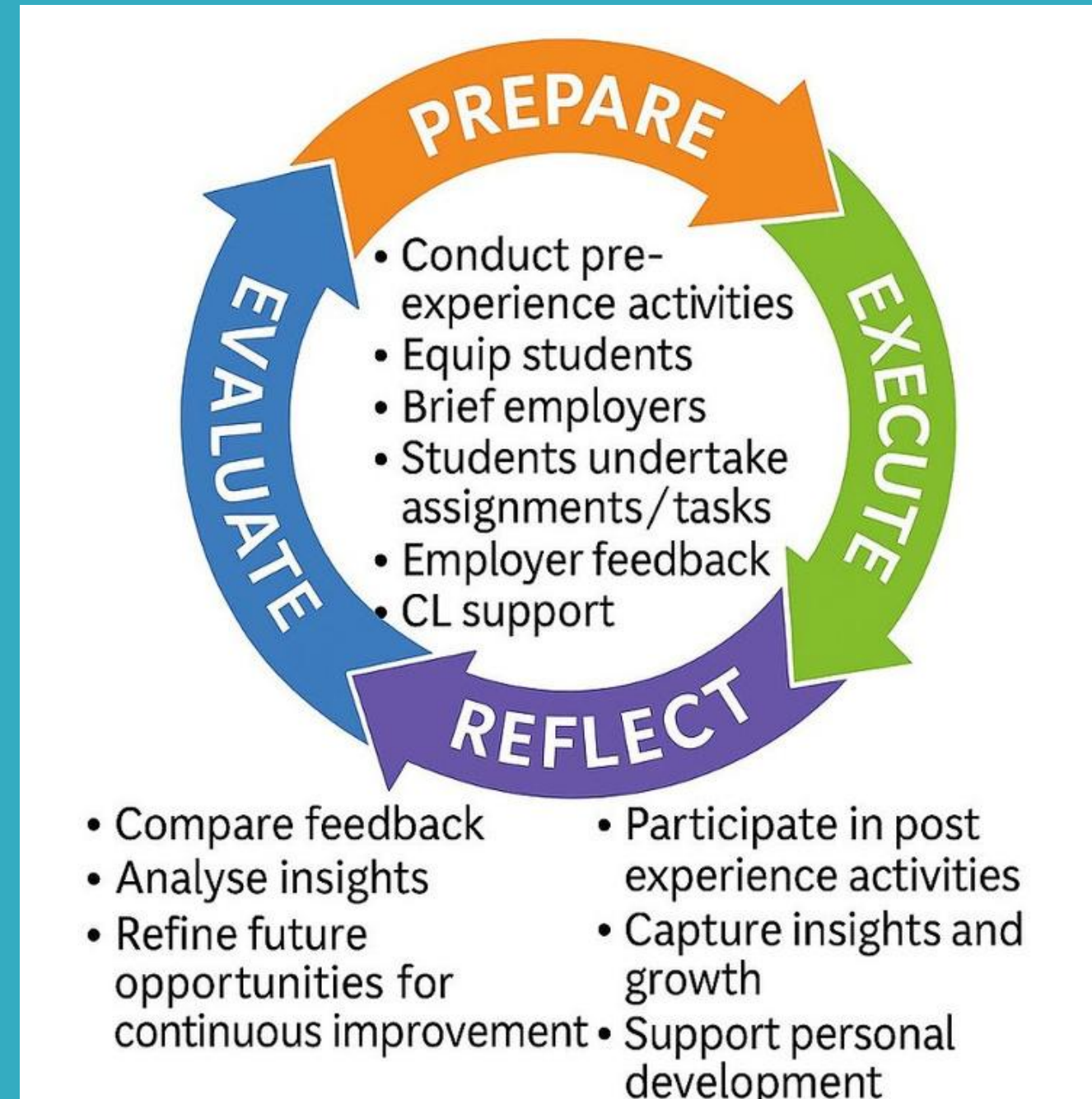
**E – Evaluate:** Gather data, measure impact, acknowledge distance travelled; adjust for next time. Review and action feedback from students and the employer to ensure continuous improvement.

**Prepare → Execute → Reflect → Evaluate = turns experience into action AND learning into impact!**





# The PERE Model Checklist



**Prepare → Execute → Reflect → Evaluate = turns experience into action AND learning into impact!**  
Email: [Ladi@7CC.services](mailto:Ladi@7CC.services) for your individual copy.

# Two Weeks of Experience Explained



## KS3 (Years 7–9): 1 week of work experience activities:

Visits, employer tours, multi-day projects, shadowing, in-person/virtual







## KS4 (Years 10–11): Totalling 1 week of placement(s)

- Real workplaces, flexible timing, variety of roles
- In-person preferred; hybrid/virtual/in-school in exceptional cases



**Ensure experiences build year-on-year** (e.g. from awareness to engagement to application)



**See PERE with these stages** - for example, '  Prepare ' ensures purpose; '  Execute ' ensures interaction; '  Reflect ' and '  Evaluate ' ensure learning is captured and applied.



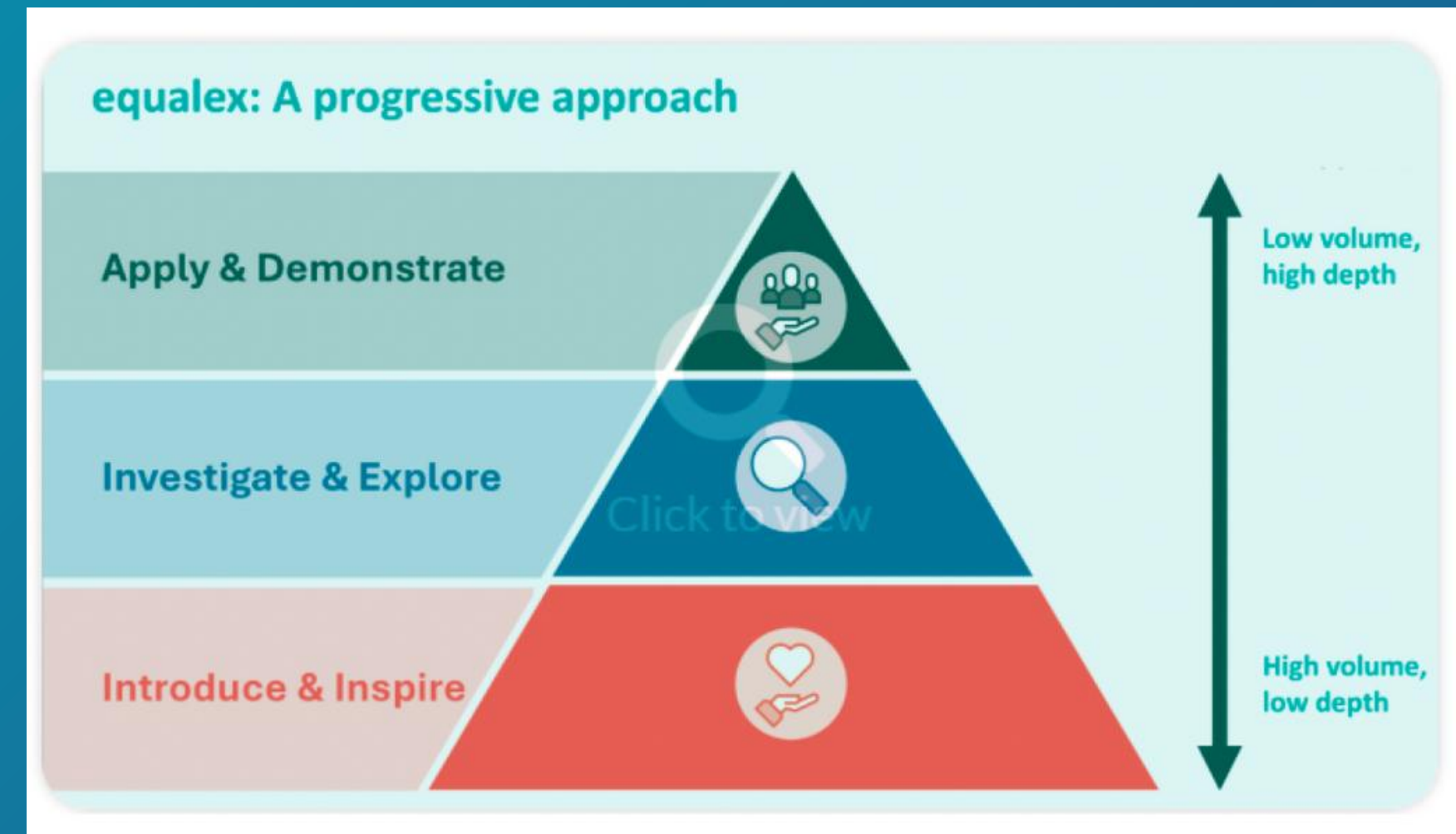
**The work experience guarantee is up to year 11; it doesn't include year 12 & 13. 6th form programmes should be responsive to the 16-19 study programme requirements**



# EQUALEX

Developed by the CEC and supported by Careers Hubs, the EQUALEX approach offers:

- A framework of structured learning outcomes to raise the quality of work experience for learners
- A multi-year, multi-experience model supported by the curriculum and accessible to ALL learners.
- A tiered approach providing a structure offering breadth and depth of workplace experiences



**1. Quality:** A multi-experience model that uses learning objectives to join activities together during a young person's time at school

**2. Equity:** A minimum of 10 days' worth of work experience - tailored days, blocked periods, etc.

**3. Flexibility:** Structured to support all types of school and business, including smaller employers - hybrid, virtual, etc

See PERE **within each of these stages** - for example, '**Prepare**' ensures purpose; '**Execute**' ensures interaction; 'Reflect' and 'Evaluate' ensure learning is captured and applied.

## KEY Features of Equalex

# Reduce Barriers Through Flexible Delivery

- In-school placements are valid if they meet the meaningful criteria
- Virtual and hybrid models are acceptable with a good structure
- Group projects, employer-led challenges, and simulated environments can count when designed properly
- SEND learners may need tailored vocational profiles and pre-placement support
- It is for YOU as a school/college to decide how YOUR offer is meaningful and impactful (as external CDPs, we guide)



**In-school placements**



**Group projects**



**Virtual and Hybrid Models**

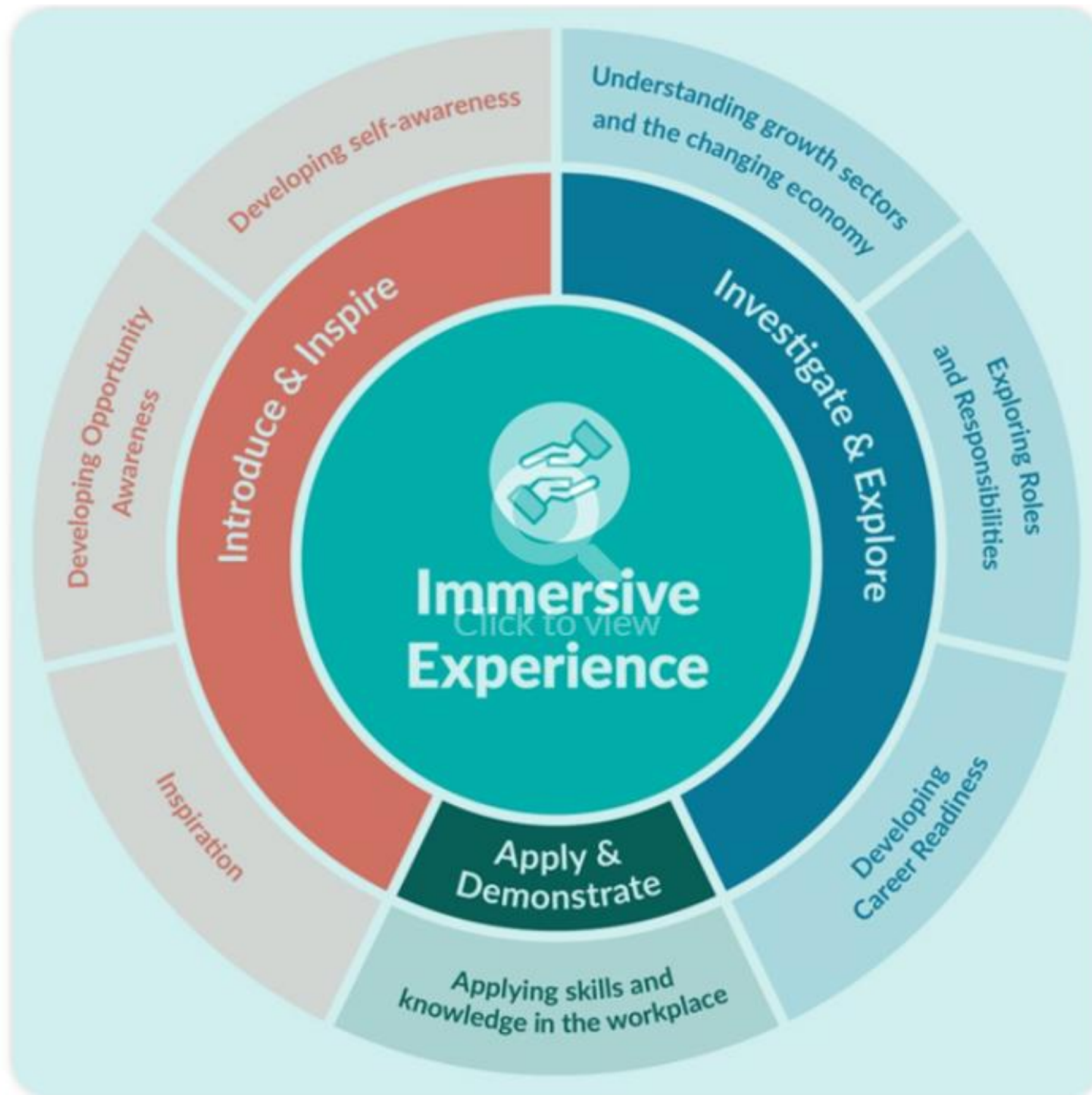


**SEND Learners**





# Immersive - 3 Core Themes



## The equalex learning outcomes

To meet the equalex quality standard for experiences of the workplace, students must have the opportunity to **meet and evidence the learning outcomes across all 3 core themes.**

We encourage innovation regarding delivery of this framework and have not provided guidelines on how the outcomes must be achieved. Each of these learning aims and outcomes could be achieved via experiences of the workplace, but some can be mapped against other areas of a progressive careers programme.

# Workplaces Experiences That Work!

This programme (aka “WET Works!”) delivers 10 days of an impactful, skills-rich experience. It's flexible, inclusive, and designed to meet the new statutory work experience guarantee. PERE supports **MEANINGFUL** delivery of this 10-day programme.

## Key Features:

- Tailored for KS3–KS5 learners
- Supports strategic planning for Benchmark 6 (and equalex)
- Covers two weeks' **WORTH of MULTIPLE** and varied experiences across KS3 and KS4
- Includes work insight visits, placements, shadowing, projects, and hybrid or virtual options
- Embeds preparation, interaction, and reflection (PERE)
- Empowers students to explore, reflect, and thrive in real-world settings
- Aligns with local labour market needs (SKILLS) and student interests
- Evaluation = measure impact for continuous improvement





# Example - How a school might structure meaningful and flexible workplaces experiences across year groups.

“WET Works” - All year group activities are designed to be adaptable and context-sensitive e.g. re: equity/social mobility, please replace “TYCtW” with having some students visit your Enterprise Adviser’s workplace like EA to Ruislip High School, Barbara Murphy did for 27 Y9 students who visited her place of work, Millenium Hotels in Knightsbridge or look to [KPMG One+1 Social Mobility Programme](#) or similar.

Do contact me, Ladi , my team and I are able to support you – [Ladi@7CC.services](mailto:Ladi@7CC.services)

## Workplace Experiences *That Work* — Sample Year-by-Year Model



### Year 7 (The Nicola Vyner Year)

Half-day working at the school reception desk (or KidZania/Eureka visit)



### Year 8 (The Mel Brentside Year)

Every curriculum trip becomes a workplace experience



### Year 9 (The Barbara John-Hampden)

“Take Your Child to Work” for a few hours—online or in person



### Year 10 (The Shani Ladi Year)

One-week workplace placement during term or summer



### Year 12

One-week workplace placement aligned to next-step goals

**Note:** Years 11 & 13 are typically excluded due to exams but can be flexibly scheduled for a one-week summer placement if needed.

The Work Experience Guarantee up  
is to Y11

Y12 - Y13 should be  
responsive to 16-19  
study programme  
requirements



# SEND & Inclusion: Vocational Profiling

- Capture student interests, strengths, and accommodation needs
- Identify preferred environments and potential barriers
- Match tasks to learner profiles for meaningful engagement
- Provide an employer briefing checklist for necessary adaptations
- Embed reflection and feedback for continuous improvement
- Please see – [SEND Vocational Profiling Tools](#)

National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen) A not-for-profit charity, and the leading professional membership body dedicated to promoting the education, training, advancement, and development of individuals with special educational needs, disabilities, or learning differences.





# Inclusivity in Action

- ✓ Vocational profiling for SEND learners
- ✓ Tailored support and preparation
- ✓ Hybrid / in-school options where access is a barrier
- ✓ Proactive employer engagement and flexibility





# Building a Progressive Model

- Sequence experiences over time (Y7 to Y11) (and Y12-13)
- Build learner confidence and independence
- Align with curriculum and local skills priorities
- Track progress, feedback and reflection
- We are all LINKED (one big happy family):
  - Gatsby
  - Stat Guidance from DfE
  - CEC equalex
  - PERE
  - WET Works etc.





# ALL Inter-Connected

## GATSBY Benchmarks

Based on international evidence of what works, we can therefore define a world-class standard. I saw evidence of this in Finland. They have been updated. BMs are interconnection between the updates:

For example, Benchmark 1 ensures structured delivery, which is **linked to the Whole-School Development Plan** – ie Benchmark 6 experiences are not only meaningful but also meets statutory requirements too. BM6 is part of BM1.

**Statutory Guidance** - Operationalises Gatsby's international standards, emphasising that "meaningful" experiences are essential.

**CEC's equalex** helps Careers Leaders practically implement statutory guidance on meaningful encounters.

**PERE** operationalises the statutory and Gatsby definitions into tangible steps schools can adopt.

**WET Works** does all the above.





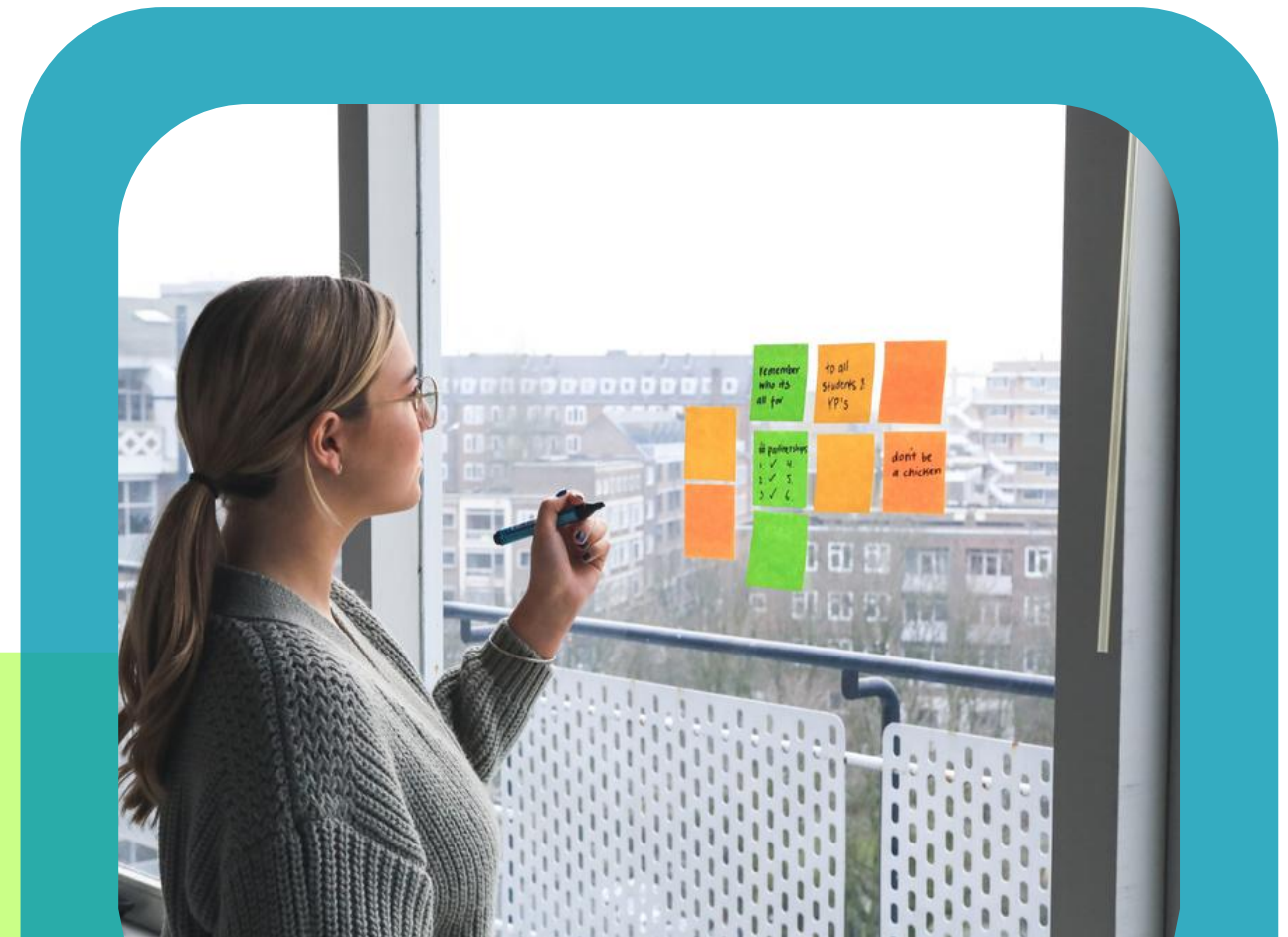
# Evidence It

Keep records of who took part, what happened, employer details, and student feedback – Compass+, Unifrog, Careers Calendar.

Showcase meaningful examples in careers reports, SLT briefings, and Ofsted files

Use student voice and employer feedback to improve future experiences

Use the CEC's **learning outcomes framework** to benchmark impact





# Tools to Support You

✓ CEC's Work Experience Framework & Learning Outcomes

✓ SEND Employer Guidance & Vocational Profiling Tools

✓ Employer Standards Self - Assessment Tool

✓ PERE Model – Prepare, Execute, Reflect, Evaluate





# Your Turn: Discussion Activity

## In Groups

- 1) Where is your school/college now with Benchmark 6?
- 2) What's one challenge and one opportunity in your context?
- 3) Share a successful approach others could learn from





# Interactive Breakout Activity

- In groups, design a two-touchpoint series for a sample cohort
- Use PERE and programme outline
- Identify ways to save time and costs



# Key Takeaways

- Work experience is evolving – not just placements but **\*\*progressive experiences\*\***
- Benchmark 6 is a driver for **\*\*strategic, inclusive planning\*\***
- Meaningful = (from statutory guidance is **purpose + interaction + reflection**) = **PERE!**
- You're not alone – national tools and local partnerships are there to support you

**Think Ladi and 7CC**







# Thank You For Your Attention

**A n y   q u e s t i o n ?**

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#WorkplacesExperiencesThatWork

#PEREmodel

