TIME TO ENGAGE: A HANDBOOK FOR BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS
Our world is changing at a rate never before seen. In few places is this truer than in the business environment where new technologies and changing market trends are predicted to dramatically alter the makeup of our jobs market over the next decade.

Already, employers point to a ‘skills gap’, a disconnect between the experiences, qualifications and aspirations of school and college leavers and the jobs available to them. In order to create a thriving economy, we need to guarantee that businesses have access to a ready and willing skilled workforce. In order to ensure that young people have fair access to fulfilling jobs and careers, they need to understand what opportunities are out there and how to access them. In short, if our economy and our young people are to live up to their potential, employers and educators need to work together to ensure that young people leave education with a real knowledge of the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in today’s business environment.

There are many forms that business engagement with schools can take from offering careers advice and work placements to mentoring staff, assigning real life projects and demonstrating the real world relevance of the curriculum. Each business and business person will have their own preferences and areas where they are most keen to add value.

While this document deals specifically with business engagement with schools and colleges, business engagement with universities, apprenticeships, traineeships and various other avenues also remain extremely important.

At the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, we firmly believe that businesses are a force for good in communities. It is our hope that by reading this document you too, will consider working with schools, colleges and other education providers in your area to both to help attract the brightest talent to your company and industry, and to support the long term successes of our nation’s young people.

Henrietta Brealey
Policy and Patron Advisor
Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce
‘IF OUR ECONOMY AND OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TO LIVE UP TO THEIR POTENTIAL, EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVE EDUCATION WITH A REAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED IN TODAY’S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT’
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For some years now, businesses have reported issues hiring school, college and university graduates. Key areas identified are:

- A lack of young people trained in key disciplines such as science, engineering and IT.
- Concerns about ‘soft-skills’ such as communication, team work, resilience and self-management.
- A lack of work experience¹.
- Poor careers advice creating a disconnect between the information given to young people in schools and the reality of today’s jobs market².

Overall, this trend of being unable to find young people appropriately skilled or qualified for available roles is known as a ‘Skills Gap’.

This skills gap, while not the only factor, has contributed to high levels of youth unemployment. Across the EU youth unemployment stood at 21.7% in July 2014, over double the unemployment rate for the population as a whole. It has also led to a rise in ‘over-qualification’ amongst young people in employment³ as college and university leavers find their qualifications and aspirations do not match up to the roles available to them.

Already, it appears, our education system is not keeping pace with the needs of businesses and the job opportunities available and that needs to change. This is increasingly important as our economy is predicted to undergo substantial changes over the next decade. As new technologies continue to streamline processes and improve productivity, forecasts predict a decline in demand for traditional administrative, secretarial and skilled and semi-skilled manual roles. By contrast, we can expect a rise in high skilled, managerial and professional jobs. Our ageing population will also drive up demand for carers and low skilled elementary jobs⁴. We need today’s young people today to be aware of the changing nature of the opportunities available in the economy in order to ensure that:

1) Businesses are able to find staff with the skills they need to help them grow, encouraging them to invest and continue to create more jobs and opportunities in the UK.

2) Young people’s aspirations and qualifications match the opportunities available, giving them a fair chance of gaining fulfilling employment and long term career opportunities.

In order for young people to be able to make these informed choices about their aspirations and qualifications, they, and the institutions that educate them, need greater understanding of the modern jobs market and business environment.

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¹ CBI/Pearson, Education and Skills Survey 2014
² CBI/Pearson, Education and Skills Survey 2013
³ World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Employment (2014), Matching skills and labour market needs: Building social partnerships for better skills and better jobs
⁴ UKCES, Working Futures: 2010-2020, August 2012
Schools, colleges and universities are best placed to see to young people’s academic education. However, it is businesses and business people who are out experiencing current industry trends on a day-to-day basis. It therefore seems only logical that to ensure young people leave education work-ready, businesses and schools need to work together to make it happen.

Fortunately, this is increasingly being recognised by employers, Government and schools. Many businesses are already engaging with schools and young people with many more exploring options for doing so in future. The Government recently released statutory guidance for schools around careers guidance and inspiration for 11 to 18 year olds which explicitly highlights the need for meaningful partnerships with businesses. Finally, there are increasing numbers of schools recognising the added value partnering with employers can bring to their institutions. What is needed, is for this pace of change to accelerate and positive partnerships and activities replicated across all areas of the country.

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5 Department for Education, Careers Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff, April 2014
Five million young Europeans are looking for a job. Many of them will miss opportunities because they lack the right qualifications or experience. In response, the European Commission has launched Youth on the Move, a flagship initiative aimed at helping these young people to gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to make their first job a reality. It aims to:

- Make education and training more relevant to young people's needs.
- Encourage more young people to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country.
- Encourage EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.

**Key components include:**

- “Your first EURES job” a pilot project providing advice, job search and financial support to young jobseekers who want to work abroad and recruitment and training support for companies – particularly SMEs.
- European Vacancy Monitor which provides an intelligence system on labour market demand across Europe for jobseekers and employment advisors.
- The European Progress Micro-finance Facility which provides financial support to help young entrepreneurs set up or develop their businesses.
- The European skills passport, a form of online CV which allows skills to be recorded in a transparent and comparable way.
- Encouraging Member States to introduce a youth guarantee to ensure all young people are in a job, training or work experience within four months of leaving school.

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Jobs Growth in the EU between 2013 and 2025:

A BIG INCREASE IN SERVICE SECTOR JOBS. ESPECIALLY IN HIGHER-SKILLED AREAS SUCH AS PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, BUSINESS SERVICES AND COMPUTING.

AN ESTIMATED 3 MILLION JOBS WILL BE CREATED.

OVER 5 MILLION NEW TECHNICIAN AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL JOBS WILL BE CREATED.

APPROXIMATELY 19.4 MILLION NEW JOBS REQUIRING HIGH-LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE CREATED.

THE SKILLS GAP

27 MILLION UNEMPLOYED WORKERS IN THE EU IN 2013

4/10

European employers reported difficulties in finding employees with the right skills.

57%

Of EU employees were in a job that matched their skills in 2010.

Youth unemployment stands at 21.7% over double the EU average of 10.2% (July 2014)

European Commission Eurostat, Unemployment Statistics [online], accessed 15/09/2014
THE BUSINESS CASE: WHY ENGAGE?

While it is increasingly well recognised that employer engagement with schools can have positive effects, it is also the case that both business people and teachers share something in common: limited time. As a result, it is important to point out that employer engagement with schools is not simply ‘a good thing to do’ but also something with a clear business case for both employers and teachers.

Employers:

Engaging with schools can:

- Give you access to a high value resource: creativity. Many employers who work with schools are inspired by the fresh thinking and innovative solutions suggested by pupils.
- Provide a direct connection to your potential future employees, creating a talent pipeline of young people who understand your industry and the skills needed to succeed there.
- Provide a means of engaging your own staff, giving them an enjoyable outlet to try new skills and work with new people, improving staff retention.
- Offer opportunities to train and develop junior staff in areas such as public speaking, confidence building and building effective professional relationships.
- Reflect well on your company’s brand, creating opportunities for positive PR and building a strong standing in your local community.

Teachers:

Engaging with employers can:

- Motivate and inspire your students, improving behaviour and engagement with the curriculum.
- Improve uptake of ‘difficult’ subjects such as maths, sciences and foreign languages by demonstrating their real world value.
- Give you access to personal and professional development opportunities.
- Have a positive impact on Ofsted inspection results and help fulfil your school’s responsibilities under recent Department for Education statutory guidance
  
  Department for Education, Careers Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff, April 2014

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6Department for Education, Careers Guidance and Inspiration in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies, School Leaders and School Staff, April 2014
"We’ve been working increasingly with local schools and colleges because we are so aware of the gap between education and work place readiness, and because we have derived so much satisfaction and a sense of delivering real value, from working with young people who have such a significant transition to make.

We worked with a large number of students at Alderbrook School, exploring some of the key behaviours and attitudes they will need to develop over the next year or so as they are confronted with choices and decisions. Our team learned so much from the sessions we delivered around the need to keep things simple, to fully engage the audience and to value all contributions.

We have worked with students at South & City College delivering interview and assessment centre skills. This work involved us conducting dummy interviews and we learned important lessons about not assuming any level of knowledge or skill in this area.

Finally, I would wish to mention the work we are doing with young Housing Association residents, determined to break away from narrow horizons resulting from their disappointing school education, and to create businesses of their own. We have met some amazing people and are coaching and mentoring them as they develop their businesses.

Their ideas and the way they approach business is refreshing to say the least and has changed the way we work with some of our established clients.”
“At Heartlands Academy, which Ofsted judged ‘Outstanding’ in 2012 and again in 2014, we have developed a sophisticated level of business connections with a range of companies such as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Deloitte, NHS, STEM, Enabling Enterprise, Severn Trent Water and EDT. Business in the Community and Chambers of Commerce have acted as a catalyst, enabling us to expand our partnerships across Birmingham.

Our students want to achieve and have a successful life. Our business partnerships help them make this a reality.

As part of our activities, students have attended enterprise sessions delivered by BMW, Jaguar and Thomas Vale Construction. Students taking part in these sessions reported feeling more confident, learning new skills and having a much greater understanding of the business environment.

We also work closely with not-for-profit company Enabling Enterprise on a structured enterprise programme, embedding enterprise and employability skills in the curriculum. We work particularly closely with PwC, one of Heartlands Academy’s primary partnerships, who work with Enabling Enterprise on offering business mentoring and professional enterprise guidance. Each October, PwC work with us on an employability day for over 150 students, where classes are replaced by employability workshops, business speed dating and communication workshops. It helped demonstrate the importance of employability skills and experience as well as academic achievement when seeking employment.

Our engagement with businesses not only supports and benefits our students, but our academy as well, contributing, in part, to our Outstanding Ofsted rating.

Our students are positive about their experiences. Recently Heartlands Academy was invited by the Secretary of State for Education, Nicki Morgan to attend and present at the 2014 Conservative Party Conference. Year 12 Students Farheem Ali and Jurana Ahmed spoke about the importance of business engagement and how it opened doors that may have been previously closed and broadened their aspirations. Our Academy Community Director Rachel Buckingham spoke about the importance of embedding business partnerships across the curriculum and the importance senior management support for this activity.

You can view the Heartlands Academy Conservative Conference speech on the Staff Blog section of the Heartlands Academy website.”

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Enabling Enterprise was started in 2009 by teachers who were worried that the students leaving schools were not equipped for ‘real life’. A not-for-profit organisation, we partner with schools and businesses to build students’ skills, experiences and aspirations. Our approach and effectiveness have been recognised with two national teaching awards and this year we worked with over 35,000 students across England.

In a time when youth unemployment has topped 20% and the CBI has criticised schools for failing to produce ‘rounded and grounded’ school leavers, Enabling Enterprise programmes mobilise teachers and businesses to embed simple changes throughout the curriculum.

During their time at school, students take part in weekly lesson time projects – whether setting up a small business or creating a school magazine. Alongside this, students have opportunities to visit top businesses to explore the links between the classroom and the ‘real world’.

**Business Partnerships**

Our engagement with businesses has been key to our success over the last five years. Students are invariably enthusiastic about their experiences, and we work hard to ensure that volunteers from our business partners also have a rewarding experience.

“We could see the change in the children as the day went on – increased confidence, teamworking and creativity. We will be very happy to do it again.” Kay Gossage, Head of Human Resources, Unity Trust Bank plc

To find out more or find out about how your business can host an inspirational school visit:

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IN PRACTICE: WHAT DOES BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS LOOK LIKE?

Business engagement with schools can take many forms based on the preferences of the school and business in question. While no doubt incomplete, see below for a succinct introduction to some of the ways businesses and schools can work together:

**CAREERS ADVICE**
Working with a school’s careers advisor or teacher to offer advice to students specific to your industry and experience.

**CLASSROOM CHALLENGES**
Working with teachers to set challenges or projects for students based on real work situations that utilise skills taught as part of the curriculum.

**FUNDRAISING**
Utilising staff, industry contacts and networks to support or initiate fundraising activities for school or college activities and initiatives.

**GOVERNANCE**
Becoming a school governor, bringing a private sector perspective to the role and influencing school strategy, such as around engagement with businesses.

**GUARANTEED INTERVIEWS**
Offering a set number of students per year guaranteed interviews for appropriate jobs with your company.

**INSPIRATIONAL TALKS**
Delivering inspirational talks on your career and experiences to broaden students’ awareness of your industry and business.
SHADOWING
Offering students opportunities to shadow staff at your workplace, raising awareness of career opportunities in your industry and deepening understanding and experience of the world of work.

WORK PLACEMENTS
Offering formal work placements for students of anything from a week to a year to develop their employability skills, awareness of skills needed to succeed in work and develop links to your industry.

WORKSHOPS
Help deliver workshops on employability skills such as communication, personal presentation, time keeping and organisation skills.

MENTORING STAFF
Becoming a mentor to a teacher, helping them learn more about your industry and the career opportunities there and in connecting the curriculum to its real world applications.

MENTORING STUDENTS
Becoming a mentor to a student, supporting them with personal or academic skills development or selecting subjects for study at Further and Higher Education.

MOCK INTERVIEWS
Supporting schools in delivering mock interviews, providing genuine employer feedback and supporting young people in improving their interview skills.
There are many ways in which these partnerships can develop. Some businesses proactively seek out the contact details of schools, academies and colleges in their local area to begin the conversation. Others join forums which connect business people and educators such as the Chase Chamber of Commerce Staffordshire Schools Forum or Solihull Chamber of Commerce’s Partners In Education.

In terms of school governance, individuals interested in becoming school governors can access opportunities via individual schools and colleges or their local authority. In the case of Greater Birmingham based businesses, you can search for ‘School Governor’ on the Birmingham City Council, Staffordshire County Council or Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for more information.

While many businesses and schools work together directly, some work through intermediaries. These organisations such as social enterprises, private providers and charities, act as a ‘broker’ linking up schools and businesses for set activities. If you are new to working with schools or are simply very short on time and unsure about forming direct partnerships with educators, this may be a very good place to start.
HOW THE GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE CAN HELP

SOLIHULL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PARTNERS IN EDUCATION (PIE)

Partners in Education brings together businesses inspired by engaging with education and local schools and colleges. Solihull Chamber regularly promotes specific opportunities for businesses to support local educators as well connecting the two at events to foster long term partnerships.

For more information contact Solihull Chamber of Commerce on info@solihull-chamber.com.

CHASE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE STAFFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

The Staffordshire Schools Forum connects secondary schools in Staffordshire to local employers to encourage greater partnership working, dialogue and discussion.

For more information contact Chase Chamber on info@chase-chamber.com.

BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION

The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce supports a number of local business engagement with education initiatives, supporting delivery of relevant events and promoting appropriate opportunities to members.

For more information contact Henrietta Brealey on h.brealey@birmingham-chamber.com.
‘Fun, Interesting and Informative’ words that were used to describe our Employability Workshops, by a year 12 student at Bishop Challoner School.

Gordon Franks Training is a family business that has been bridging the skills gap between employers and schools, for over 30 years. How do we do that? Our Young Pre-Apprenticeship Programme aims to give students the opportunity to work towards an accredited qualification via work experience on a one day a week basis, resulting in many being employed by the parent company.

We devised our Employability workshops, which also include sessions on Teamwork, Confidence & Interview techniques, after speaking to both employers and schools, about what students require to make them more ‘work ready.’ All the sessions are delivered on a fun and friendly basis, using various techniques including circus skills!

To combat the rise in youth unemployment we have devised ‘The One Job Challenge’ which will pitch friend against friend in a realistic job application process, the like of which has never been executed before.

Employers, why not work with us and mould the workforce of tomorrow by offering students work placements or assisting us with Interview sessions?

For more information:

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The University of Birmingham manage the STEMNET contract in Birmingham & Solihull. STEMNET brings the application of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects to life for thousands of young people all over the UK. Through the flagship STEM Ambassador Programme we can help employers to forge strong links with schools and colleges. We help you get involved in classroom projects, STEM subject talks and STEM Clubs, and arranging site visits and work placements, for example. Volunteer STEM Ambassadors provide a vital link between employers and the workforce of tomorrow. It is the only well-established role-model programme in the UK specifically for STEM; the programme wants to create a buzz among young people about STEM. 87% of teachers report increased student awareness of STEM subjects and their real world application as a result of working with STEM Ambassadors.

By getting involved, employers can have a demonstrable, positive impact, helping to address the STEM skills shortage, which is vital for employment and the UK economy. Employers who are involved with the STEM Ambassadors Programme find opportunities to:

- Enhance the careers of their own employees, who develop planning, communication and presentation skills.
- Improve their organisation’s brand recognition in the community and demonstrate that they are safeguarding the future of STEM.
- Challenge stereotypes about what kinds of people can make a career out of STEM skills.
- Develop young peoples’ skills, knowledge and understanding of STEM applications in the real world.
- Develop confidence, team-work and presentation skills – improving the overall employability of young people, no matter what path they choose.
- Inspire teachers about activities they can use to enhance the STEM curriculum.

For more information contact:

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WorkTaster is the name for an online digital hub which will make it easy for school students aged 14-18 to find work experience. At the moment it’s difficult for pupils and schools to find placements. “Right now, getting the right work experience is about who-you-know,” says co-founder, Claire Toher. “And it shouldn’t be. We need to bring it into the 21st Century, and make it fair.”

The WorkTaster digital system will connect employers and students and at the same time it will provide an easy-to-use admin system for the hard-pressed teachers who have to administer everything.

“Work experience increases employment prospects by 40%,” says the other founder, Sally Tomlinson. “But there’s more to it than finding a week in the workplace. Students need to prepare CV’s and profiles, present themselves well, practice interviews, and above all put thought into what they want to do with their lives.”

“WorkTaster doesn’t just digitise the process, and make it fairer,” says Claire Toher. “It’s an educational journey for the youngsters. It makes them think how others see them, and about what they need in order to get a foot on the next rung of the ladder. WorkTaster will include stacks of advice for young people, but also lesson planning and advice for schools about how to involve employers in practice interviews and CV writing workshops.”

“We’ve consulted widely with schools to see what’s really lacking,” says Sally Tomlinson. “And we’re determined to make work experience fair and inclusive.”

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Unsure about engaging with schools? You can still help the business leaders of tomorrow through schemes such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a cross-border exchange programme, which provides new and aspiring entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small or medium-sized enterprises - in other participating countries.

The exchange of experience takes place during a stay with an experienced, host entrepreneur, which helps the new entrepreneur acquire the skills needed to run a small business.

As a host entrepreneur, you can benefit from fresh ideas from a motivated new entrepreneur on your business. They may have specialised skills or knowledge in an area you do not, which could complement your business objectives. Furthermore, the New Entrepreneur will be able to provide you with key insights into foreign markets. There is no cost to the host entrepreneur; the new entrepreneur receives a grant to cover their costs. Most host entrepreneurs enjoyed the experience so much that they decide to host other new entrepreneurs afterwards.

The New Entrepreneur will benefit from on-the-job training in a small or medium-sized enterprise in other Participating Countries allowing the New Entrepreneur to gain and nurture key skills and confidence required to start and/or grow their business. The New Entrepreneur can also benefit from access to new markets, international cooperation and potential possibilities for future collaboration with business partners abroad.

It is really a win-win collaboration whereby both parties can discover new European markets and different ways of doing business. In the long-term, you will benefit from wide networking opportunities and continued collaboration with each other, possibly as long-term business partners (e.g. joint ventures, sub-contracting activities, contractor-supplier relationships, etc.).

If you are interested in finding out more either as a new entrepreneur or a host entrepreneur:

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ABOUT THE GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce is a business membership organisation representing over 2,500 businesses in the Greater Birmingham area. We offer a wide array of support services for local businesses. We also offer exclusive opportunities, services and discounts to Chamber members only. Whether you are looking to expand your professional network, explore new markets, upskill your staff or influence local and national government policy the Chamber is here to help your business.

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce is made up of five geographical branches: Birmingham, Burton and District, Solihull, Chase and Lichfield and Tamworth Chambers of Commerce and specialist groups: the Institute of Asian Businesses and the British American Business Council, as well as a networking organisation for individuals: Future Faces.

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce: Connecting you to opportunity

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EUROPE DIRECT

The Europe Direct Information Centres (EDIC) network is one of the main tools of the European Union (EU) to communicate, inform and engage with its citizens particularly on their rights and entitlements as EU citizens. In addition, the EDIC’s are responsible for disseminating information amongst their local communities pertaining to the EU’s priorities (notably the Europe 2020 Growth Strategy) and to promote participatory citizenship at local and regional level.

ABOUT EUROPE DIRECT BIRMINGHAM

Europe Direct Birmingham, delivered by the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce is part of a network that extends across the twenty-eight EU member states and is designed to be the “one-stop-shop” authoritative source of information on Europe and EU initiatives from the citizen’s perspective. EDIC Birmingham is strategically placed to take advantage of its extensive knowledge on the EU and its programmes allowing it to advise its local community on the many benefits of the EU and how to access them. Europe Direct Birmingham is a mine of information regarding rights, opportunities, freedom of movement and employment, language, culture and all the bits and pieces that make up the individual countries under the European umbrella.

Europe Direct Birmingham’s overall aim is to provide local citizens easy access to information and the opportunity to make known and exchange their views, in all the fields of the EU’s activities, in particular, of those having an impact upon people’s daily lives.

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This project is funded by the European Union
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