

## 'Essential' work placements boost starting salaries

*Young workers £87 a month better off with on-the-job experience*

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Young people could bolster their earning power by over £1,000 a year straight after college or school with the right work experience, employers claimed today.<sup>i</sup>

New research conducted among Britain's bosses for the Learning and Skills Council shows that young people are likely to earn £1,050 a year more – the equivalent of £87 a month – if they have gained relevant work experience while at college or school.

And young people's earning power is boosted even further<sup>ii</sup> if a young person combines relevant work experience with a set of qualifications equivalent to five A\*-C GCSEs or a Level 2 diploma, so young people should strike a balance between work and learning.

With work experience already forming part of many young people's learning, through week-long placements giving young people a brief introduction to work – and programmes such as Young Apprenticeships,<sup>iii</sup> the LSC is urging more employers to work with the Council to engage in this and offer young people experiences which provide them with valuable transferable skills demanded by the Leitch report.<sup>iv</sup>

The research shows that experience of the work place doesn't just lead to monetary gain, it also improves the chances of a young person getting a foot in the door. Close to nine in ten (89 per cent) recruiters said they considered relevant work experience an important part of a CV and more than one in ten (13 per cent) employers would not interview a candidate without this requirement – a figure which rises to 15 per cent if a candidate does not have the minimum set of qualifications.

Equally, more than half (55 per cent) of employers said that in the future candidates without work experience would find it even harder to find a job – and a fifth (17 per cent) went so far as to say that they believed relevant work experience will soon be “essential” for all junior job seekers.

Opportunities for young people to gain experience are vast but the LSC believes employers could still offer more aspirational work placements to teenagers. Just under a third (31 per cent) of employers currently offer paid work experience at their organisation and less than half (45 per cent) offer unpaid work placements.

Julia Dowd, Director of Learning at the Learning and Skills Council, says, “Work experience is absolutely crucial in today's competitive job market. Not only does gaining practical work-based experience give young people an opportunity to see whether they are suited to a job, it also means a bigger pay packet when they enter the world of work full-time.

“Official figures show that young people with the minimum set of qualifications earn £230 a month more than someone without, and this research really proves that job opportunities open to young people are far wider by staying on in learning

after 16 and getting valuable on the job training on a course which leads to a recognised qualification rather than full-time work.

“There are plenty of ways to achieve the minimum set of qualifications – anything from a Level 2 diploma in Motor Vehicle Maintenance, Fashion Retail or Music Technology to five A\*-C GCSEs. So today we’re reminding young people that it is absolutely necessary to get the minimum set of qualifications and relevant experience before entering the job market as without this it will be difficult to find employment or earn a good wage.”

Phil Hope MP, Skills Minister for the Department of Education and Skills, said:

“By offering work experience to young people we will help create the skilled workforce of tomorrow. Work experience is essential in linking education and employment. It is critical that all young people are given work experience opportunities as this allows young people to make decisions about their learning and employment paths.

“We need employers to be working increasingly closely with schools and colleges – by offering Apprenticeships, work based learning and work experience for those in learning.”

**ENDS**

Employers should contact the Careers Officer at their local school or college, or contact their local Connexions centre if they would like to offer work experience placements.

**For media enquiries please contact:**

Simon Francis, Band and Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 7340, M: 07738487259, E: [simon.francis@bbpr.com](mailto:simon.francis@bbpr.com)

Sarah Weston, Band and Brown Communications, T: 0207 419 7323, E: [sarah.weston@bbpr.com](mailto:sarah.weston@bbpr.com)

Chris Blackwood, Band and Brown Communications, T: 0207 419 8635 E: [chris.blackwood@bbpr.com](mailto:chris.blackwood@bbpr.com)

Ros Holley, Band and Brown Communications: T: 0207 419 8614 E: [rosalind@bbpr.com](mailto:rosalind@bbpr.com)

**Notes to editors:**

This press release applies to England only.

**LSC**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

**Apprenticeships**

- There are currently 255,500 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 180 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce
- Apprenticeships provide 16-24 year-olds with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they are being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated young people
- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
  - 'Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
  - 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

**EMA**

All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,810 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for the EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema) for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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<sup>i</sup> The Learning and Skills Council commissioned YouGov to independently question 412 employers online between 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2006

<sup>ii</sup> With the equivalent of five good GCSEs and work experience, a young person's starting salary is boosted by £141.67 compared to someone without (LSC / YouGov employers research). This rises to £230 a month more over the course of a young person's career (ONS – Labour Force Survey)

<sup>iii</sup> Since September 2004, Work Related Learning has been a statutory requirement for all young people. As well as this the Young Apprenticeship Programme is a two year programme for 14-16 year olds. It is aimed at capable and motivated pupils who would like the chance to experience workplace life in a supported way and who will benefit from building a strong foundation before moving on to an Apprenticeship at 16 or another progression route of their choice. Other programmes include the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) which provides vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds who are likely to benefit most. Young people on the programme will study away from their school - at a college (or with a training provider) for one or two days a week throughout key stage four and work towards vocational and work related qualifications whilst developing their knowledge and understanding in a work context

<sup>iv</sup> Lord Leitch's report 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills' was published on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006. The full report can be downloaded at [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/523/43/leitch\\_finalreport051206.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/523/43/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf)