

# Developing the Young Workforce

## The value of virtual engagement with young people

### Final Report



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# Executive Summary



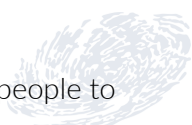
Rocket Science was commissioned by Developing the Young Workforce in March 2021 to conduct a research study on the value that young people can gain from virtual engagement with the world of work. This research seeks to understand the impact of the shift to online learning on young people, and any benefits from the transition to virtual engagement that could be retained post-pandemic. The research also investigates how digital accessibility varies across young people in Scotland, and the impact of digital poverty on the benefits young people can gain from virtual engagement with the world of work.

A range of research methods, including a national survey of young people, interviews with DYW staff and other stakeholders, and fieldwork with young people, were used to collate data to answer research questions related to the transition to virtual engagement with the world of work. Research findings have implications for current and future virtual world of work experiences.

Our research found that impactful, engaging virtual learning experiences related to the world of work typically have the following features:

- Young people are involved in the design of virtual opportunities
- Experiences are interactive, live, and structured with a blend of on and off camera work
- Short bursts of activity are used, rather than day-long event
- Virtual delivery is supported by an in-person facilitator to engage young people. This is particularly important for younger students.

Benefits and drawbacks of virtual delivery were explored. Numerous stakeholders, including DYW coordinators, discussed the benefits of virtual experiences in exposing young people to employers and opportunities in areas which would be inaccessible in person. This benefit applies to all young people but is particularly pertinent to those living in rural and remote areas who otherwise could not access opportunities. Online engagement can also encourage more employers to volunteer their time, as it affords them increased flexibility and is arguably less time consuming.



However, online engagements present a trade-off in terms of opportunities for young people to socialise with others. Generally, young people who engaged with the research prefer engaging with the world of work in person. They think that online support cannot substitute for “hands on” experience of the world of work, and most stakeholders broadly agree. They acknowledge that there are some elements of online support which should be retained in a blended model, and that some sectors or work types lend themselves better to virtual delivery such as digital/tech, as opposed to the care sector or engineering.

Benefits and drawbacks of using virtual vary by the groups of young people involved. Being at home can be a barrier to engaging with online support, especially for those who do not have access to a private space. Consideration must be taken whenever virtual experiences require young people to connect from home or their own devices of the potential impact of digital poverty to ensure a universally positive experience of the engagement.

Both stakeholders and young people agree that virtual experiences should always add value compared to what could be done in person, enhancing the offer around the world of work. This is an important principle to underpin decisions made by DYW regarding the format of future delivery. Each learning experience should be considered on a case-by-case basis, to determine whether virtual can enhance the offer. This report provides a checklist that can be put to practical use to support this decision making process.



# 1. Introduction and context

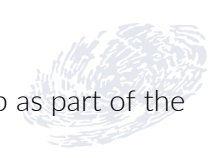
Rocket Science was commissioned by Developing the Young Workforce in Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian, Glasgow, and Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire in March 2021 to conduct a research study on the value that young people can gain from virtual engagement with the world of work.

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on what organisations are able to provide to young people in terms of an experience of the world of work. The rapid transition to online learning has presented an opportunity for organisations to test out a range of online approaches to continue to support young people to engage with the world of work despite barriers to in person engagement. This has included modification of delivery mode of a range of experiences, including:

- Work experience (virtual work placements)
- Industry insight sessions eg live presentations from employers
- One to one mentoring
- Mock interviews
- Career fairs
- Static content eg video, YouTube playlists with employers/employees talking about work in their sector.

This research seeks to understand the impact of this shift on young people, and any benefits from the transition to virtual engagement that could be retained post-pandemic. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed:

- To what extent do virtual employer experiences work for young people? What aspects of them work well and less well?
- What differentiates the virtual experience from the face to face experience? What skills and insights does it help young people gain? Is the virtual experience able to offer benefits that are greater to or different to those offered by face to face experience?
- How do the benefits vary by the type of experience involved (eg presentations, live engagement, workshops, mentoring etc)?
- How do these benefits – and the difference between virtual and hands on experience – vary between different employment sectors?

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- What has been learnt from virtual experiences that it will be important to keep as part of the offer for young people after Covid-19?
  - What examples are there of particularly innovative and valuable virtual experiences across the DYW network? What makes these particular approaches valuable and to what extent is this about local issues (eg rural dispersion and lack of access to employers) and what could be adopted elsewhere?

The research also investigates how digital accessibility varies across young people in Scotland, and the impact of digital poverty on the benefits young people can gain from virtual engagement with the world of work.


A range of research methods, including a national survey of young people, interviews with DYW staff and other stakeholders, and fieldwork with young people, were used to collate data to answer the above research questions. A detailed methodology and research materials are provided in [Appendix 1](#).

## 2. Views of stakeholders



### Summary of findings

- To increase engagement and ensure a positive learning experience, experiences should be interactive and engaging for young people. Getting the balance right between time spent online and independent learning is important.
- Most stakeholders felt that the move to online / virtual delivery had broken down geographic barriers and had expanded (and increased) their reach.
- Virtual delivery had increased the accessibility of world of work experiences that certain groups might previously have been excluded from, because of their location or backgrounds. In addition, reaching disabled young people or those who have additional support needs (ASN) was a benefit of virtual delivery.
- Stakeholders identified both positive and negative aspects of the virtual world of work for young people who are disadvantaged.
- There has been an increase in the number of employers volunteering their time to provide experiences related to the world of work and training providers outwith local regions.
- Face to face, in person engagement is still seen as an important aspect for young people and should be retained.
- The exposure to virtual and remote ways of working was an important experience for young people.
- The way in which the session, course or work experience is structured was a large determinant of how positive the experience is for young people
- The level of engagement and impact of virtual work experiences for young people was also dependent on the school (and the individual) in terms of their ability to engage and access to devices.
- Stakeholders are all in agreement that virtual work experiences are here to stay, and a model of blended / hybrid delivery should be adopted.



As part of this research we interviewed 27 stakeholders from across industry and education including training providers and schools as well as four DYW leads (Edinburgh and the Lothians, Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, and Dumfries and Galloway) to get a sense of what was being delivered virtually / online and the impact of this approach for young people across schools, further education and colleges. Stakeholders were asked about:

- Elements of virtual work experiences for young people that worked well and less well
- Lessons learnt from COVID-19 and what blended learning could look like
- Examples of innovative and valuable virtual experiences across the DYW network? (these are highlighted in the case studies)
- What makes these particular approaches valuable and to what extent is this about local issues (eg rural dispersion and lack of access to employers) and what could be adopted elsewhere?).

### 2.1.1 Differences between face to face and virtual

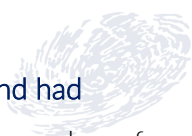
It is important to note that the move to virtual / online delivery was done in a very short time, and all stakeholders mentioned how impressed they were with the speed at which this happened. Young people were able to continue with school and accessing work of work experiences. Although the benefits of virtual engagement compared to face to face were not fully understood, at least it provided young people with some continuity and engagement. Stakeholders were asked about the differences between virtual and face to face experiences and what the associated benefits were.

**Most of the stakeholders interviewed said that ensuring sessions were interactive and engaging was important for a positive outcome.** This is important as, throughout this research, stakeholders have commented on increasing levels of “online fatigue” which is negatively affecting engagement.

Examples of what positive and interactive engagement would look like are as follows:

- Use of the right software with functionality to encourage participation (ie virtual whiteboards, breakout rooms, snap surveys)
- Ensure any resources are engaging, through the use of images and diagrams
- Keeping the experience short and snappy meant young people were more likely to engage and absorb the information
- Getting the balance right between time spent online, listening to people speak, and being able to undertake independent learning, is important.





Most stakeholders felt that the move to online had broken down geographic barriers and had expanded (and increased) their reach. Some stakeholders had been able to increase the number of young people taking part whereas others had been able to deliver in areas which had previously been too far away for face to face engagement. This has meant that not only are employers and training providers able to reach more young people, but that young people are able to access, and be exposed to, a wider range of opportunities than if the world of work had continued in person. However, one stakeholder also noted that in more remote regions, there has been some push back as they are working to keep their young people local.


“We’re tending to work with larger numbers of young people online than you would face to face, so it allows young people to collaborate more.”

“[The] geographic barrier breakdown is a critical piece of virtual impact and engagement.”

Importantly, a few stakeholders felt that virtual delivery had increased the accessibility to world of work experiences that certain groups might previously have been excluded from, because of their location or backgrounds.

“We’re able to reach a lot of people we wouldn’t have been able to reach before, people who wouldn’t have been able to travel for placements.”

Stakeholders implied that the move to virtual delivery had benefited young people in both rural and urban areas, as both were exposed to more employers and opportunities. Only two stakeholders touched on challenges and differences around rurality, which was related to digital connectivity in the more rural areas such as the North East and Dumfries and Galloway.



While there are concerns about encouraging further outward migration, particularly of young people, it does increase the contact with employers and provide opportunities for young people in rural areas where they may not have been able to access them. The positives of virtual and remote working could also alter commuting patterns, with young people able to live in a rural area and commute occasionally into the larger cities.


“Running the world of work with employers, [such as] virtual recruitment means that accessibility to employers increases for young people. [Virtual opportunities with employers] could also mean that commuting patterns suddenly look different to young people as they don’t have to be in an office 5 days a week. This could shift the labour market boundaries substantially.”

“Not as effective as face to face, harder to get buy in. If it has to be online, then there needs to be benefit in it. Maybe more for really rural young people where these kinds of opportunities are less common.”

**Reaching different groups of young people, such as those who are disabled, have additional support needs (ASN), or come from more deprived areas was a benefit of virtual delivery.** One stakeholder indicated that virtual delivery could work better for some groups of young people, particularly those with learning disabilities.

“In person has limited the diversity of young people and we can breakdown this barrier with virtual.”

“... [We have] pilots around how we work with ASN students, with DYW as well. We adapt our processes if it is online to make it easier to engage with for young people with additional support needs.... And virtual works really well for some young people with certain types of learning disabilities such as autism.”



There were differing views between stakeholders around the positive and negative aspects of the virtual world of work for young people who are disadvantaged. Some stakeholders felt it removed barriers, whereas others felt it made it harder for young people to participate in world of work activities. In terms of the positive benefits, one stakeholder felt that perceptions of what it means to be productive, and where you work, can be different and reduce barriers such as the cost of travel to the work placement. It can also remove some anxiety around starting a new job and meeting new people.

“[It is] working for some disadvantaged people. We work with young people from socially deprived areas. [The barriers are] the expense of travelling and the expense of having to go to the office every day. The equality of expense has never been taken away, [but virtual delivery] removed these. Takes away the financial expense; and we issue a laptop and software.”

“[For] some of them this is their first job, so it reduces the barriers – nervousness, anxiety, of meeting people, coming into an office.”

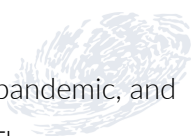
In addition, one stakeholder felt that virtual delivery can make it easier for some disadvantaged young people, especially those who struggle to keep to time, and other issues that they might face.

“Although attendance has been sporadic on some sessions, the young people are not as late as they would normally be because they only have to log on.”

Although there have been some positive outcomes for young people of virtual delivery of the world of work, it has also created additional barriers, along with COVID-19. Some young people have been unable to engage (for several reasons), and they find it difficult to link the experience with the curriculum and struggle to build relationships.

Some stakeholders mentioned that disengagement wasn't always because young people did not want to engage, but there were other barriers which prevented them from doing so. These include: home environment, access to internet and devices, privacy, and space to work.

“IT was an issue. [There] were a lot of young people who didn't have laptops or internet. Issues were mainly with the lack of access to the equipment. I would say most of the young people are pretty good with the kit, but some didn't have access to the kit.”



A few stakeholders felt that trying to engage young people who were disengaged pre-pandemic, and those who are harder to reach, made virtual world of work delivery more challenging. There are challenges around digital literacy and their home environments. One stakeholder mentioned that this needs to be taken into consideration to ensure that young people are not excluded, but that they are still provided with a universal offer.

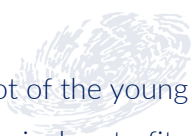
“Challenging to get harder to reach, ... engagement affected by so much, such as living in a small noisy house, sharing devices. How do we develop this without excluding people?”

**There has been an increase in the number of employers volunteering their time to provide experiences related to the world of work, and in training providers outwith local regions delivering sessions.** DYW coordinators are seeing more employers, and a wider range of employers, taking part in employability sessions, whether it is through informal talks, or mock interviews. This has included speakers from the rest of the UK, but also from around the world. This is an important benefit to young people, as they are able to meet with different employers in other sectors which may be of more interest to them, therefore opening up other opportunities that young people might not have been aware of. It also enables young people to meet more people across the business which gives them the full understanding of the business and helps grow their awareness of national and international opportunities.

“[For] employers, it was half a day’s time commitment previously, online is less of a time commitment for them.”

“COVID-19 has opened up a whole load more opportunities for some of the communities we serve, like Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, and Western Isles. Industries are limited and [have a] wide geographical spread – so if [young]people want to do something where there is limited representation then online gives them that opportunity. We have had people on from Italy and Greece who have delivered inspirational sessions.”

In addition, schools and young people have had opportunities to be involved in other experiences across the country that would not have been able to engage with previously. The impact of this has been noticeable, with one stakeholder stating that schools where they delivered had seen an increase in interest of careers in Cyber Security.



“[It] has worked in our partner schools. I have had feedback from teachers that said a lot of the young people now want to pursue a career in cyber security, and they have adapted their curriculum to fit that.”

Not only are young people able to interact with a wider range of employers, but there are also benefits of virtual work experience as they are able to engage with other young people from different areas which they wouldn't get to do if it was in person.

“It has opened up access for young people - they have been able to meet new and different people and other networks. Opening up the world and opportunities for them.”

“What surprised us about this was that, because it was national and not the same school or class, all the young people really engaged with each other, apart from the initial awkwardness.”


As a result of the reduced time commitments required for employers to participate (mainly travel times), some stakeholders have been able to engage employers in the co-production and delivery of sessions, and one stakeholder has been able to embed their training sessions within the curriculum.

**Face to face, in person engagement is still seen as an important aspect for young people and should be retained.** Several stakeholders felt that, although there were benefits to online delivery, such as reduced time commitments, and young people still having positive relationships during lockdown, the online experience has not been as effective as face to face, as it was harder to build relationships, encourage engagement from young people, and ensure impact.

“It was good that young people were able to have a positive relationship during lockdown. But I don't think it is as effective as face to face, harder to get buy in.”

“[It is] evident that they prefer face to face – I've had young people saying that to me. At the time, when things were virtual, they didn't have much to look forward to.”

Most of the areas highlighted by stakeholders that worked less well virtually were mainly related to teething problems as a result of the speed of the shift from face to face to virtual delivery. There is important learning here for DYW, educators and employers which is useful to understand as this new way of working (ie increased remote working and delivery) is here to stay.




Access to both software and hardware were initial teething problems that were experienced with the move to virtual / online delivery. Making sure young people had access to laptops or iPads was challenging both when in schools and when learning from home. Some of the access challenges stakeholders mentioned were:

- Young people who had to share devices with siblings or parents were not always able to access live sessions.
- Even if young people had access to devices, they were not always able to access the content as the software wasn't compatible, or because the school had blocked external sites for safeguarding reasons. In addition, some young people didn't have access to Wi-Fi which also limited their ability to engage.
- Not all schools allow young people to have their phones out in classrooms which can limit virtual engagement.
- Generally, there are more infrastructure issues, which requires more planning, and ensuring there are enough devices for the young people.

Stakeholders who delivered virtual experiences had to take safeguarding, GDPR regulations into account, while trying to understand what systems could be used by all parties and ensuring the safety of young people. While safeguarding is a factor to consider in face to face delivery, there were additional elements that did not need to be considered previously. Some of the elements that didn't work well online as a result of safeguarding were:

- People delivering experiences couldn't always see the young people, as some were required to have their cameras turned off. This made engagement and any interaction difficult, which was likely to reduce the impact of those sessions for young people.
- Some platforms (such as Google Classrooms) could not be accessed by employers, and personal email addresses could not be used because of safeguarding regulations.

“When they can see you, but you can't see them, it is really difficult delivering, from our perspective. Whereas if you meet someone and see them across a table, you can build rapport. I think physical will always be [young people's] preference, but there is a place for hybrid.”



“[The system schools use] can only accept speakers that have PVGs... I have had to source speakers that have PVG / DBS. [Other platforms, like] Vimeo were much better because schools were more confident about safeguarding and we could get a wider range of speakers involved.”

It was felt that most of the challenges described above would be overcome easily, but as a result of the quick move to virtual this was, at times, problematic. These early challenges around safeguarding will be important to learn from if a blended model is adopted, as it is important to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Another challenge in the early stages of virtual / online delivery was the need to upskill teachers and employers in the use of digital platforms and software. Initially, a few stakeholders found that employers needed a lot of support with technology to be able to deliver. In addition, stakeholders had found that the virtual / online experience for young people had depended on the school and DYW co-ordinator in terms of access to hardware and views on the importance of digital (pre-pandemic) but also on whether the teacher was on board with remote learning.

“For teachers, delivering online was really new, and there was a bit of uncertainty about how it would all work.”

### **2.1.2 Additional skills and insights gained for young people**

The exposure to virtual and remote ways of working was an important experience for young people. A few stakeholders felt that, because this way of working was here to stay, it is important that young people are able to access both virtual and face to face experiences related to the world of work. Young people need to know how they will react in different situations, so giving them the opportunity to learn and gain insights in the virtual context is valuable. It is also an opportunity for them to use their current skills, such as team building and communication, in a different and more difficult environment.

“The benefits for young people in the virtual context are ... they have to use skills like team building, teamwork, with people they don't know – and they all did this.”

Another insight mentioned by two stakeholders was around getting young people to think about all the additional considerations that they would have to take into account when preparing for a virtual work experience (including mentoring, work placements, interviews):



“It makes them think about the additional things – are they dressed right, leaving enough time to connect, do they have a good signal – other skills and general awareness that they have to think about.”

“[Virtual experiences are] really helping the young people. There is a whole new layer of things they need to consider – is their IT stable, computer working, camera right angle, enough battery, appropriate backgrounds?”

### 2.1.3 Benefits for young people by the type of experience

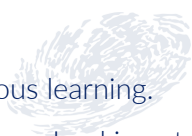
Stakeholders were asked to describe the benefits for young people of different virtual experiences. However, almost all those interviewed mentioned that there are important considerations regardless of which type of experience is being delivered (ie presentations, live engagement, workshops, mentoring). It was hard to differentiate between specific types of virtual experiences in terms of benefits.

**The way in which the session, course or work experience was structured was an important factor in creating a positive experience for young people.** Spending time upfront designing the experience; having a clear end goal; and creating a clear pathway for how young people will get to the end result were mentioned as important considerations for virtual / online sessions. Another consideration to ensure that young people can benefit from any virtual /online work experience is to link it to what they are learning at school. In addition, having a teacher or DYW coordinator leading or present in sessions was also a benefit, especially in terms of engagement.

“[You need to be] really clear of the expectations of young people – what they will be expected to learn and do, and what the end result will be, linking it to school and employment.”

A few stakeholders talked about getting the balance right, in terms of how much time young people spend online with independent, tasked base learning. One training provider felt that if they got this balance right, it would ensure that young people remained engaged and motivated. This was true for work placements where, if young people could contribute to a workplace task, they felt part of the team and were more engaged.





“We were looking at getting the balance right between asynchronous and synchronous learning. [Getting the] balance between people being together on calls and working on their own.... Looking at a 60: 40 split by individual and group work.”

“[Having resources to show] what an induction looks like, what does a day look like, mapping what they need to do to get an apprenticeship, linking in with SDS My World of Work skills profile.”

Another stakeholder felt that young people will benefit regardless of the type of experience if the school or college was set up properly - in terms of the availability of software and devices, teachers and DYW coordinators being confident to use the technology, the people delivering are actively trying to engage the audience, and the sessions are well structured..

“Biggest things are the competence of teachers / lecturers and their ability to engage in tech; ability to set the scene, tone setting. Setting expectations, being comfortable using Teams and other software, and using interactive software like Slido, Mentimeter.”


In terms of specific examples of benefits by the type of virtual experience, stakeholders interviewed mainly spoke about **work placements**. There are mixed views about the benefits of virtual work placements from across the stakeholders interviewed and clear differences in terms of the size of the cohorts and the uptake from schools.

**The level of engagement and impact of virtual work experiences for young people was also dependent on the school (and the individual),** but in general some stakeholders found getting schools to engage with virtual experiences challenging because of the other challenges they faced as they reacted to the impact of COVID-19.

“Getting schools and young people online has been a challenge- teachers pulled in all directions in the past few months so they can’t give work experience any thought.”

While virtual and online delivery means more young people can get involved, compared with face to face, there is evidence that larger scale events and placements which have more of a national focus are not as successful as smaller and targeted placements.

“Placements designed with the young people of Glasgow in mind have had significantly more sign ups than the nationwide placements that often involve a lot of sitting and listening.”



A valuable insight (though it was only mentioned by one stakeholder) was around **the uptake of, and engagement with virtual work placements from schools**. This indicates that virtual work experiences cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach and needs to be co-developed with the employers and schools (teachers, young people and DYW coordinators).

“Some of the feedback we had from teachers was that the virtual work experience didn't work, while others are crying out for this. Those that said it didn't work said it was too much of a time commitment for young people – two days sitting in front of a computer is too much for them.”

#### **2.1.4 Differences and benefits between virtual and hands on experience by employment sectors**

From the stakeholder interviews, it was clear that certain industries or employers were able to adapt to virtual / online delivery more easily and readily than others. Stakeholders also noted that there were different skill levels and experience of digital technology before the pandemic, with many employers needing help initially to deliver effectively.


A few stakeholders said that larger employers have been at the fore of virtual delivery because they have the structures, resources, and people to deliver well and keep young people engaged. SMEs needed more support and resources to deliver, but with this help they were able to provide a range of opportunities for young people.

“Where it works is in large companies with big learning and development teams. Their resources are great, links into 'Considerate construction' - can get certificates for inductions, participation certificates.”

While many employers and training providers managed to deliver remotely and ensure young people were able to access world of work support, **sectors which require more physical labour found it much harder to adapt to online delivery**.

“[Young people] want to be out in physical work, they are looking to leave school as soon as possible. Young people were just not interested in virtual offers for this, and we tried to do different things, and they struggled with coursework. They just wanted to be in nurseries and on building sites.”

#### **2.1.5 What would good blended learning look like?**



**Stakeholders agreed that virtual work experiences are here to stay, and a model of blended / hybrid delivery should be adopted.** There are benefits to both virtual and face to face engagement and it will be important to prepare young people for both a remote and in person world of work. From the lessons learnt over the last 18 months it is clear that most of the challenges with virtual were mainly teething problems as a result of the speed at which the world of work experience was moved online. However, there are important elements that should be taken into consideration when developing a hybrid model.

**A few stakeholders felt that the virtual world of work should not be a replacement for face to face experiences,** but rather used to enhance the current offer and provide more opportunity for young people.

“Not a replacement for face to face though. It is a stepping stone – an opportunity to narrow down choices, to better understand what they want. There is also the opportunity with virtual for young people to try more than one placement.”

“[There is] value in retaining virtual work placements. There is a place for both. Even just from a numbers point of view, you can reach more young people with virtual. I don’t think you can get the same impact though with each individual young person with doing it virtually. It has its place, it is informative, but seeing people face to face and engaging with them, body language, physical is always going to be best.”

Based on stakeholder views that it is difficult to build and maintain relationships online, a few **stakeholders felt that any world of work experience should start face to face** to build a relationship and then move to online where appropriate.

“For any new [employers], we would want to do this face to face. But for existing [employers] there is no need to meet face to face.”

“Maybe you start physical – meet a year group, build rapport, then you say, ‘Now we know each other, next session is going to be online’. The physical definitely gets that relationship started.”

The move to virtual / online delivery presents an opportunity to develop a model that works for young people, teachers, employers and other stakeholders. With all of the opportunity virtual offers in terms of opportunity, reach, and choice, it has the potential to increase the impact and value of the experience. In order to have impact, stakeholders mentioned a few elements:



- **Has to be dependent on the school and the young people's needs.** For smaller more specific experiences, there is an opportunity to tailor the world of work offer (within reason) to the interests of the young people and create a bespoke offer in terms of sectors and employers for each cohort, and from a wider geography.

“While this is good, and it exposes young people to more people in business and more widely ... [we] need to be careful and take into consideration the views of young people and capacity within schools to run virtual sessions.”

“Comes down to preferences of schools - some are keen to keep local talent local and want volunteers to come in who are local to the area.... I think teachers are beginning to get used to it, but some teachers are still more reticent. Even prior to COVID-19, penetrating into schools for career education was difficult – but this has been a good opportunity to see what you can do.”

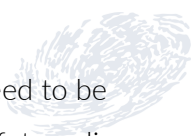
- **Working with employers.** This research found that employers are keen to keep delivering virtually and view virtual delivery positively as it is less of a time commitment, and they can reach more young people in each session. Stakeholders mentioned that COVID-19 has accelerated the uptake of virtual experiences, especially with work placements.

“Employers see the move to virtual / online delivery of work experience as a benefit and are keen to continue online delivery once things open up again.”

“One of the biggest benefits to employers is that they have said they won't go back to physical work experience because they can reach more young people in virtual and can use technology.”

Stakeholders have also said that there will be a decrease in the number of employers volunteering their time if the world of work returns to face to face. With some employers already indicating a virtual offer only, it will be important to ensure that young people gain experience virtually and face to face.

“Employers are going to take a blended approach forward and work experience will have to reflect that. Employers have been really thankful that we have embraced that.”

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- **Safeguarding requirements.** One element of virtual / online delivery that will need to be addressed if a hybrid model is developed, is around ensuring young people's safety online. This needs to be balanced with the need to ensure engaging and interactive involvement and being able to access all the resources required for the experience. While schools are comfortable with face to face safeguarding, it has been a learning curve for virtual delivery, with some platforms requiring speakers with PVGs, others not letting young people have their cameras on.

"We support young people who are care experienced, who have trauma, young people who are prone to allegations and [engagement with them is] always in a social area for safeguarding reasons."


Two stakeholders mentioned that, as part of a virtual model, there needs to be a development of a **standard for virtual work placements**, something that ensures a certain quality, and could be accredited to ensure young people are benefitting from the experience. [This has been created by Education Scotland and a group of Local Authorities, schools and with DYW](#). An accreditation or qualification could result in better engagement from young people as they are going to get something tangible out of participating in the experience. In addition, it was felt that there is a need to differentiate between online or virtual learning and virtual work placements.

"... One task is to look at what is a virtual placement versus what is virtual learning. Need to be clear as there will be a qualification attached to it. Going to do a review [and it will be] interesting to hear from schools about what it needs to look like."

"Working with Education Scotland to develop a virtual work placement standard – 1-1 support, goals set, work to be done, deadlines."

#### Examples of Innovation:

From the interviews with stakeholders, it is clear that we are in the very early stages of virtual delivery for the world of work, especially at scale. While there have been quite a few success stories and many examples of good practice emerging, it is not yet clear from this research how this will develop over the next few months or years. It is clear that the hybrid model will be pursued and from these emerging findings, new and innovative ways of delivering work experiences, that have impact and value for young people will develop. The rapid transition to virtual delivery is a significant achievement, and the pandemic has certainly accelerated much of



this work. However, some innovations (ie new services) may have been hampered by the pandemic, such as virtual reality work experiences.

At present it feels like the focus is on getting the balance right between a number of different components such as:

- Balancing innovation with the availability of hardware and software, competence and confidence of users, widespread availability or access to software
- Ensuring safeguarding procedures are complied with and young people are kept safe
- Ensuring the offer does add value, increase opportunities for young people, but ensures that groups of young people are not excluded
- Ensuring quality and impact of the experience and put in place systems and processes to measure this (such as post-experience feedback).

Considering how quickly everything moved to online delivery at the start of the pandemic, the achievements have been remarkable and it feels like there is a strong foundation on which to build as more evidence and research is published on the impacts and best practice that emerge from the last 18 months.



## 3. Views of young people

This chapter outlines our findings from surveys and fieldwork with young people. Section 3.1 presents findings from the national survey and Section 3.2 summarises our findings from interviews and focus groups with young people. Further details of our work with young people can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

### 3.1 National Survey

This section analyses results of the national survey in relation to research questions and a summary of findings is presented in the box below.

#### Summary of findings

##### *Who responded:*

- 518 young people responded to the survey. There was a representative spread of students across years S1-S6.
- Responses were mostly from young people living in East Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders and in areas of medium to low deprivation.
- St. Ninian's High School (East Renfrewshire) and Berwickshire High School (Scottish Borders) submitted the highest number of responses accounting for 52% of the responses

##### *Digital access and functionality*

- Over 80% of respondents have internet access all the time, and most use their own laptop or tablet to engage with school-related activities
- However, there is still a notable group of students (34%), who have struggled to engage with online activities due to problems with digital devices. This is likely to be an underestimation of the national picture given the profile of the survey responders.

##### *Preferred models of future learning*

- Across students from S1-6, having a mixture of both face to face and online support was the most popular option, closely followed by entirely in person support. Very few young people thought that support about the world of work should be entirely online.
- Types of support that young people think are particularly effective in person include work experience and one to one mentoring

##### *Preferred modes of online learning*

- Young people in S4 and above express a preference for online experiences which are interactive, live, and have teacher involvement.

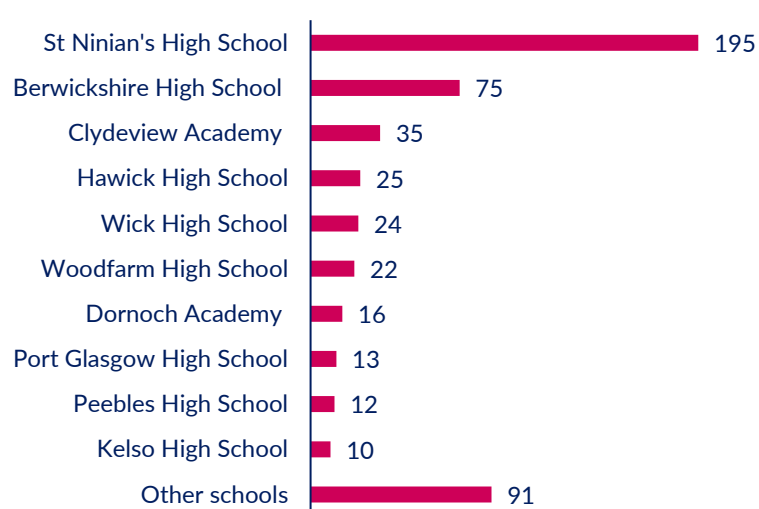


### 3.1.1 Who responded to the survey?

518 young people responded to the survey from 38 schools across 10 local authorities. 10 schools accounted for 82% of the responses, with one school, St. Ninians's High School, accounting for 38% of all responses (195 individual responses).

**Figure 1: 10 schools accounted for 82% of all responses to the national survey<sup>1</sup>. See Figure A1 in Appendix 1 for the geographical spread of respondents.**

Number of respondents by school

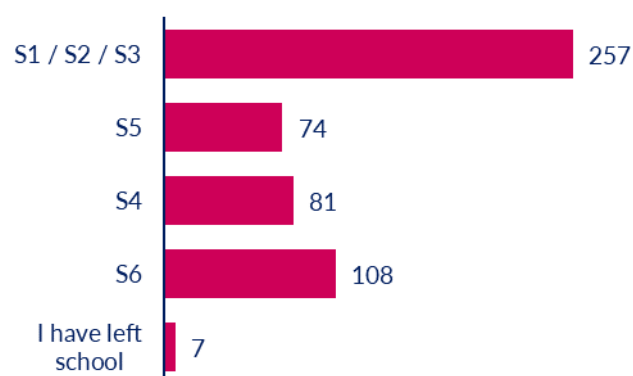


50% of responses were from young people in S4, S5 or S6. 49% were from S1, S2 or S3, with 1% from young people who had left school.

55% of the responses from S1-3 students came from St. Ninian's High School.

The number of survey respondents by local authority is shown in the following map (Figure 2).

East Renfrewshire (217 responses) and Scottish Borders (147 responses) are the most highly represented local authorities due to the contributions of St Ninian's High School and Berwickshire High School.

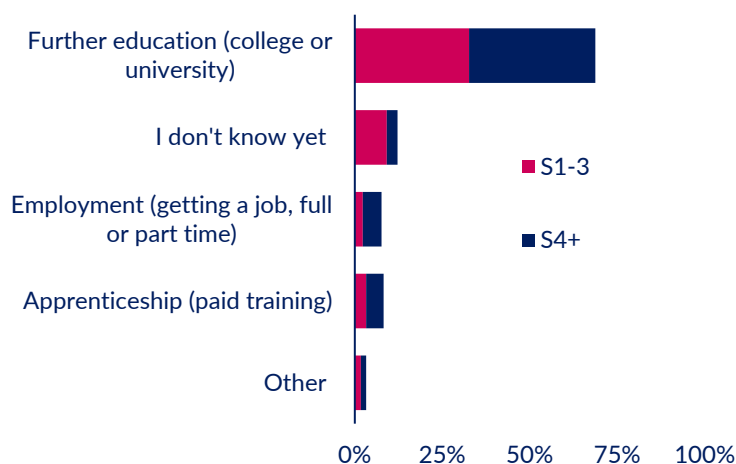
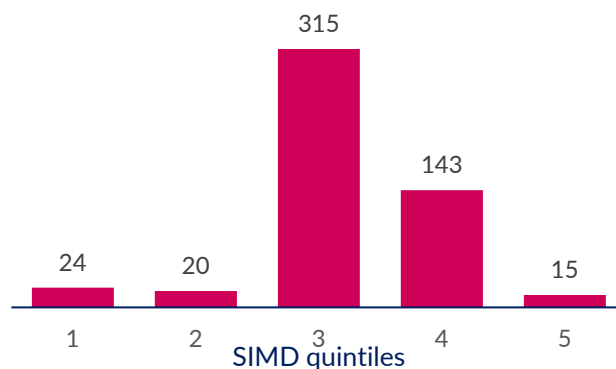


<sup>1</sup> As St. Ninians High School is overrepresented in the data set, initial analysis was conducted omitting this school and comparing results against the full analysis. The demographics and responses from this school were representative of the rest of the sample and therefore data from St. Ninians's High School has been included in this analysis in full.





Most young people surveyed lived in areas ranked in SIMD quintiles 3 and 4<sup>2</sup>. Few young people responding to the survey came from deprived areas in Scotland.



Around **2/3** of the young people who responded to the survey want to go to college or university when they leave school. While nearly 20% of young people in S1-3 were unsure of what they wanted to do, this dropped to only 6% of young people in S4-6.

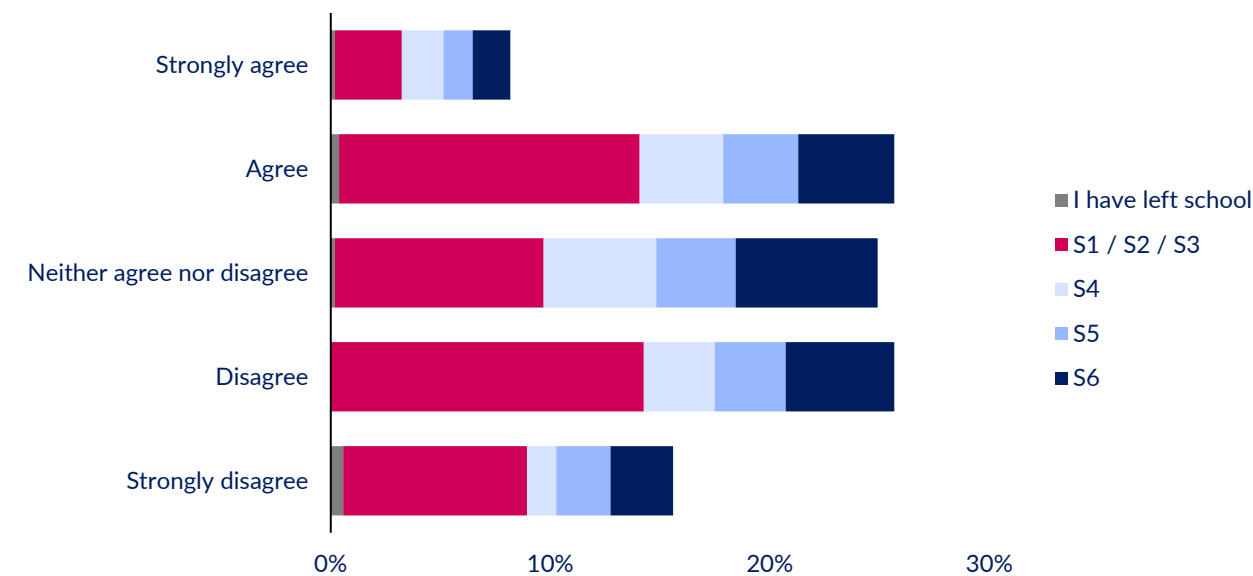
Most young people in **S1-3** responding to the survey have access to WiFi / internet all of the time (**82%**) with almost all others having internet access some of the time. A large majority of those in **S4-6** had internet access all the time (**88%**) with almost all others having internet access some of the time.

Internet access did not map closely to SIMD quintile.

Survey respondents mostly use their own laptops / tablets to engage with school-related activities when at home, across all year groups. However, a notable group (**17%**) use their smart phones to engage with activities, and this proportion is higher for older students. **8%** use a device that they share with others.

<sup>2</sup> IMD data sourced from [https://github.com/mysociety/composite\\_uk\\_imd](https://github.com/mysociety/composite_uk_imd). Please note this is an experimental dataset.

Figure 3: Responses to the question "I have had problems with my internet or digital devices (eg with laptops or WiFi) which have made it difficult to do school activities at home."



There were a broad range of responses to the question “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement - I have had problems with my internet or digital devices (eg with laptops or WiFi) which have made it difficult to do school activities at home?”.

34% of all young people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and 41% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

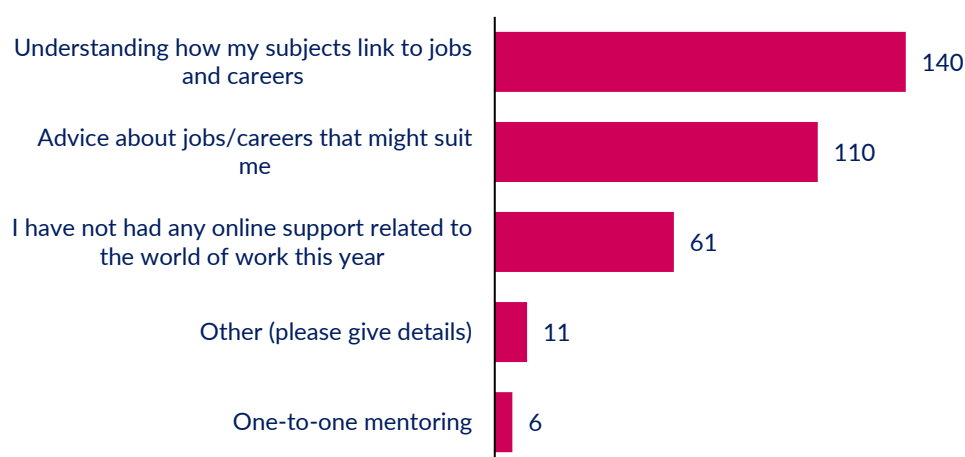
This suggests that while most young people who responded do have access to both devices and internet required to access activities related to careers at home, **there is still a notable group, across all year groups, who have struggled to engage due to problems with digital devices/WiFi.** As this survey is not representative of young people from all SIMD quintiles, it is likely that the true percentage of those impeded in their interactions with online activities by technical difficulties is higher than 34%.



### 3.1.2 Findings from students in S1-3

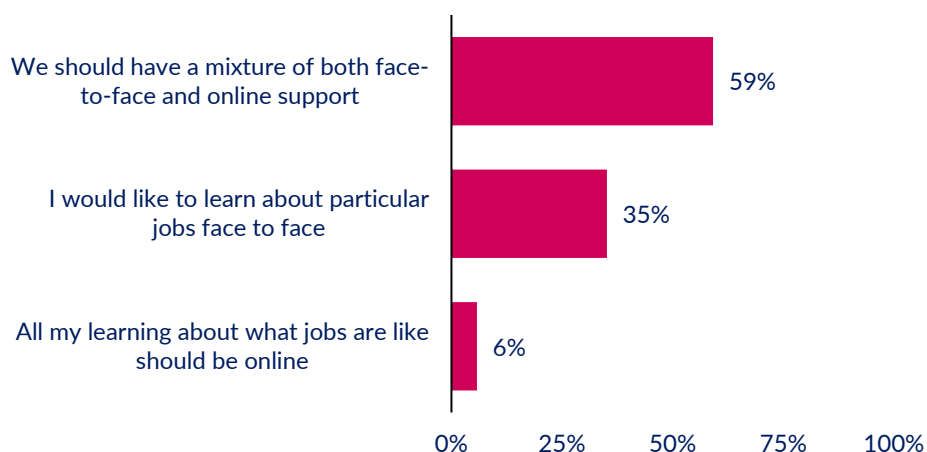
Young people in S1-3 were asked what types of online support related to the world of work they had received over the past year. **The most common type of online support was focused on understanding how subjects link to jobs and careers** and advice about careers that might suit them (Figure 4). Very few young people in S1-3 had received one to one mentoring and 61 said they had not received any online support related to the world of work.

**Figure 4: Number of S1-3 survey respondents receiving each type of support**



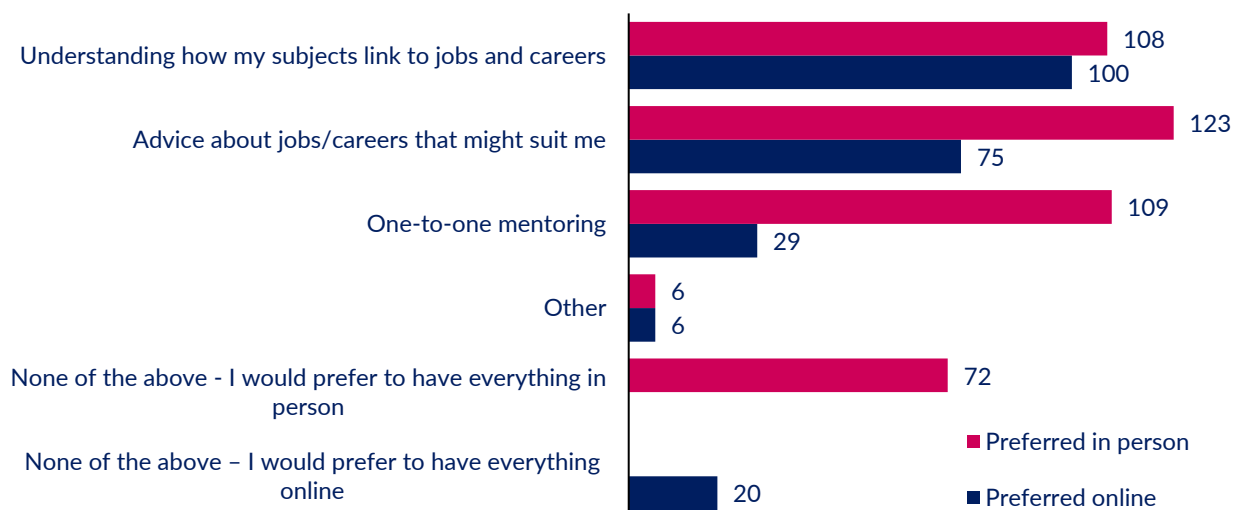
Young people were asked about their preferred ways of learning about the world of work in the future. Having a mixture of both face to face and online support was the most popular option, followed by face to face support. Only 6% of young people in S1-3 thought that support about the world of work should be entirely online (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: S1-3 students think future online support about the world of work should either be blended or entirely face to face**



Young people in S1-3 were then asked to select which **types** of support they would prefer to have **in person**, and which they would prefer to have **online**. They were able to select as many options as they liked. Across every category, support was preferred in person, with a strong preference for one to one mentoring and a notable preference for advice about careers to be delivered in person (Figure 6). **72 young people said they would prefer to have all support in person, whereas only 20 said they would prefer support to be entirely online.**

**Figure 6: Preferences between online and in person support by support type for S1-3 students**



70 young people provided explanations for their response to this question. Most said that “understanding how subjects link to jobs and careers” is the one option of the three that can most easily be delivered online, and that the others are usually more interactive and therefore benefit from being in person. A minority of students said they were more confident engaging with others online and that this was their preferred mode of communication, with most who gave explanations saying it was easier to engage with people face to face, as this minimised distractions and was a more personal experience. Some noted that difficulties with technology meant they preferred face to face support.

Finally, young people in S1-3 were asked if they wanted to share anything additional about how they want to learn about the world of work. 17 pupils provided a response which included the following:

“I think going to actual workplaces is very important, and helps people decide about whether they want to work in that area of work... I think it should continue when possible.”

“Through activities... that’ll give us an idea of what choices we have, through a more exciting and educational way - to make us intrigued to hear more perhaps?”



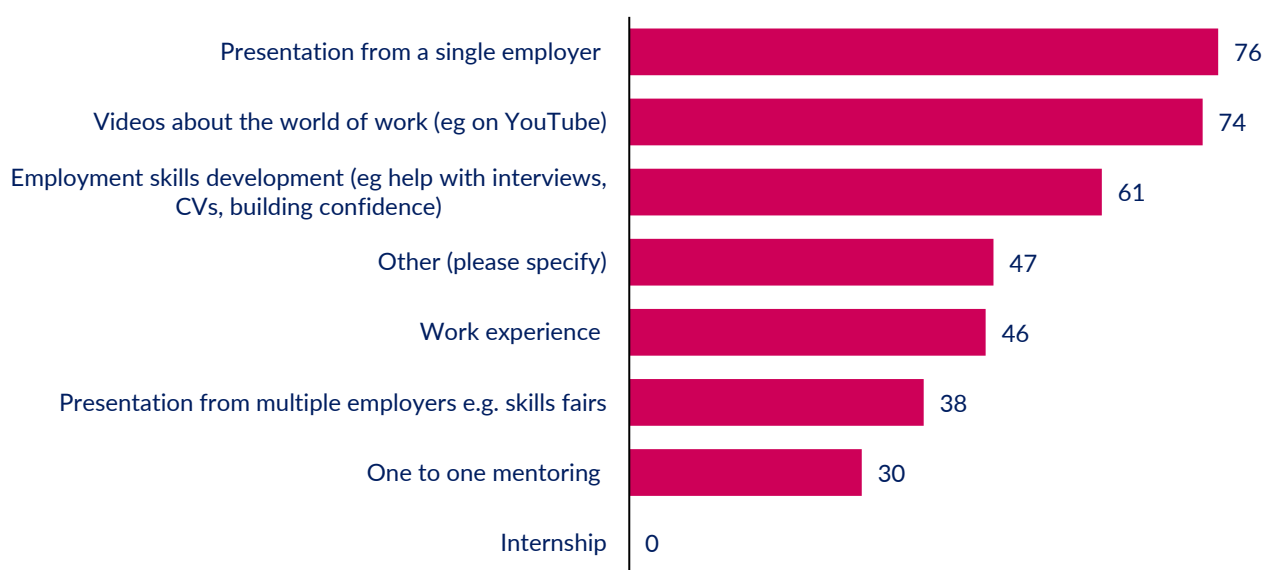
"I would enjoy learning face to face with people as it is easier for most people to understand something if you can see the person in real life. Online meetings would suffice but I feel that a face to face approach would be far more effective than online."

"It is just better to learn about these things in an environment where you are with others who can give you advice and have interaction."

### 3.1.3 Findings from students in S4-6 and those who have already left school

Young people in S4-6 and those who had already left school were asked what types of online support related to the world of work they had received over the past year. **The most common type of online support was presentations from a single employer** followed by videos about the world of work (eg on YouTube, Figure 7). None of the young people who responded had experienced an online internship.

**Figure 7: Number of S4+ survey respondents receiving each type of support**

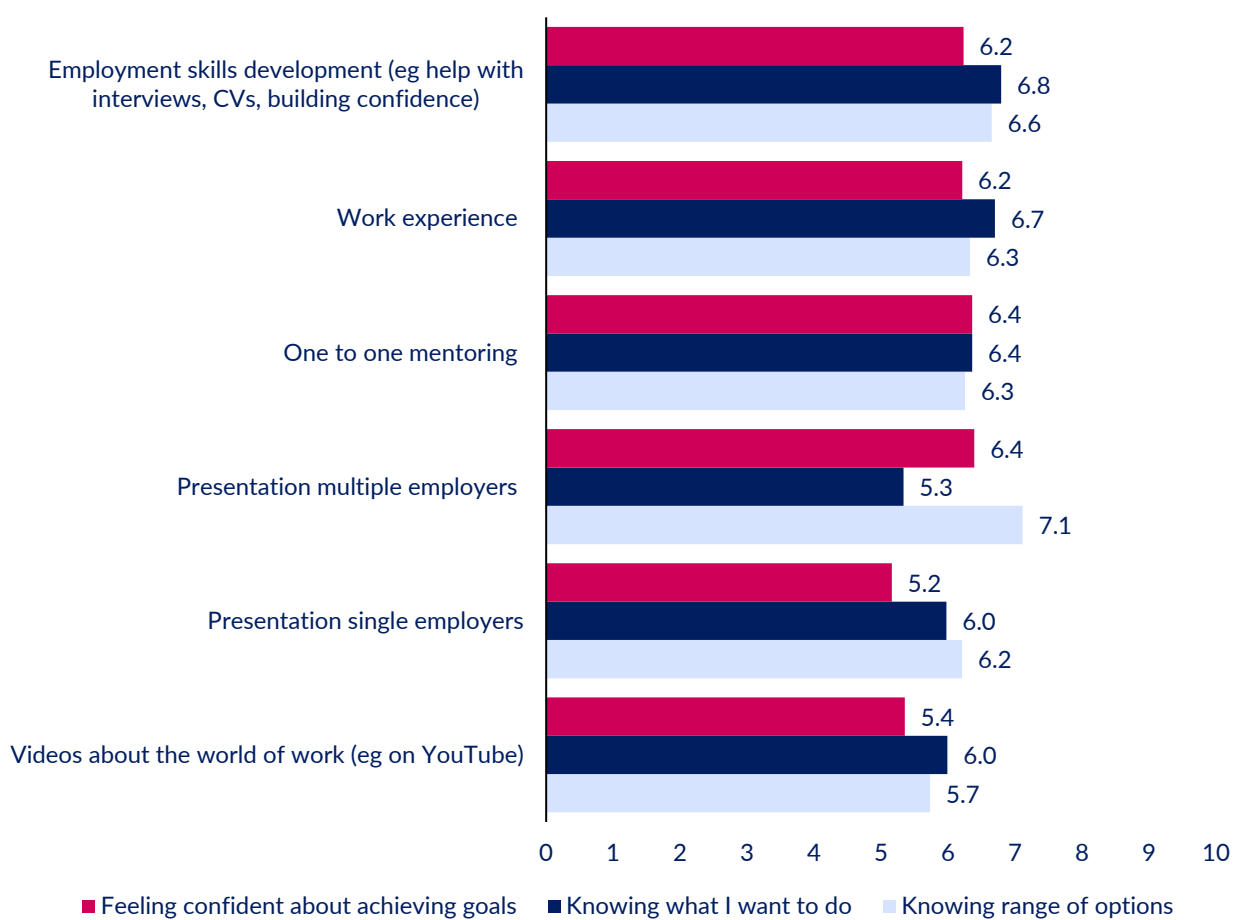


Young people were then asked about the extent to which each of the virtual experiences had supported them with three things; knowing the range of options available when they leave school, knowing what they want to do when they leave school and feeling confident about achieving their goals when leaving school. Each of the experiences was rated out of 10.

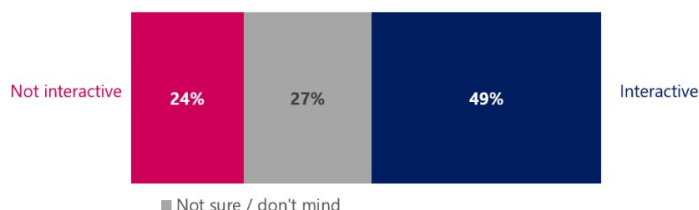
Ratings did not notably differ between different experiences (Figure 8). Employment skills development and work experience were rated more highly than other experiences on average across the three statements, with videos about the world of work having a lower rating on average than other experiences, but it should be noted that these differences are relatively small.



Figure 8: Ratings of experiences for knowledge and confidence building

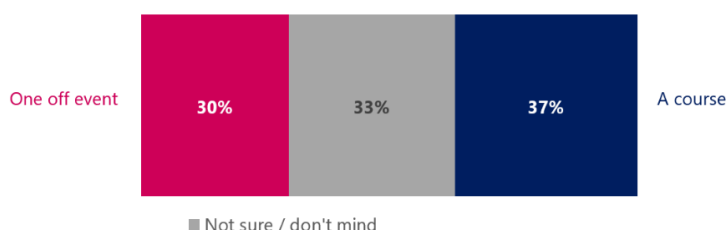
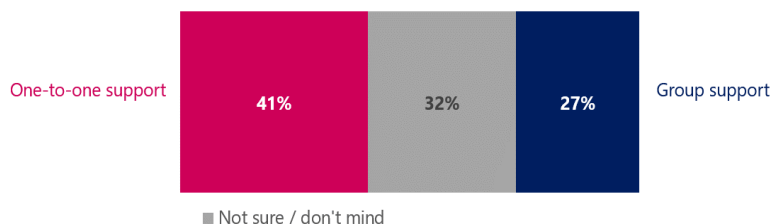


Young people were also asked about the features of online experiences about the world of work that they thought made them particularly effective in supporting learning about the world of work<sup>1</sup>.



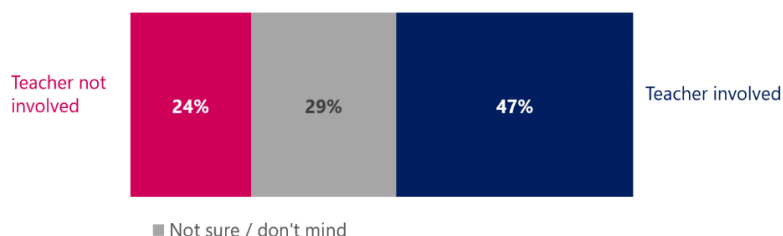
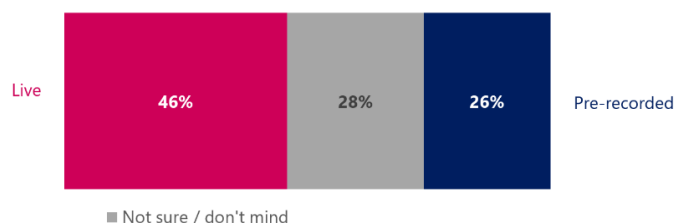
Nearly half of **young people prefer interactive online experiences** to those which were not interactive, with an average score of **6.27** (where interactive = 10 and not interactive = 1).

There was a **slight preference for one-to-one support** over group support among survey respondents, with an average score of **4.85** (where group support = 10 and one-to-one support = 1).



There was a **slight preference for experiencing a series of events about careers** over having one off events, with an average score of **5.60** (where a course = 10 and one off event = 1).

Nearly half of **young people prefer live online experiences** to those which are pre-recorded. with an average score of **4.75** (where pre-recorded = 10 and live = 1).



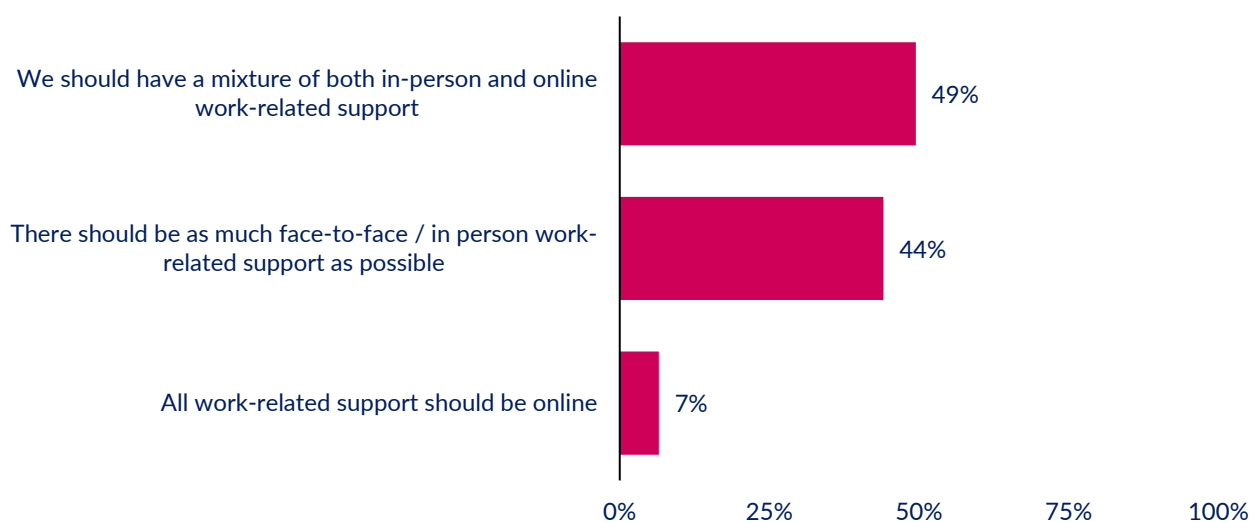
Nearly half of **young people prefer having a teacher involved in online experiences** to not having a teacher involved with an average score of **6.19** (where teacher = 10 and no teacher = 1).

<sup>1</sup> Young people selected a value from 1-10 for each feature. Scores were grouped as follows – 1-4, 5-6, 7-10.



Young people in S4+ were asked about their preferred ways of learning about the world of work in the future. Having a mixture of both in person and online support was the most popular option, followed by in person support, mirroring responses from students in S1-3. Only 7% of young people in S4+ thought that online support about the world of work should be entirely online (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: S4+ young people think future online support about the world of work should either be blended or entirely face to face**



In total, 53 young people provided an explanation for their response. Those who said that there should be a blended approach noted that there are advantages to both the online and face to face approach which can be retained in a blended model. Young people said it was good to have the option of online support as in some circumstances this is more convenient and flexible and gives access to a wider group of people in terms of both group size and geography. The benefits of in person support included: it is seen as being more personal, and more suitable for exploring the world of work in depth.

“Online means you can get more people from other countries but face to face lets them show you more.”

“Online is convenient and less pressured, but it is easier to communicate in person.”

“Both are equally important.”

Those who said there should be as much in person support as possible gave the following range of reasons:



- Face to face support is more engaging
- It is easier to concentrate in person
- In person support is more interactive
- There is more scope for question and answer in person
- Technical difficulties limit the impact of online support.

“[Face to face is] more interesting and interactive.”

“Online stuff does not work. you do not feel involved, and it is easy for things to go wrong. Face to face has always been the better option, COVID-19 is the only reason we haven’t been able to do it as much.”

“Personally, I prefer face to face over online at all times as you’re more engaged.”

Young people in S4+ were then asked to select which **types** of support they would prefer to have **in person**, and which they would prefer to have **online**. They were able to select as many options as they liked. Across every category, support was preferred in person, with a clear preference for one to one mentoring and work experience to be delivered in person, again mirroring findings from S1-3 (Figure 10). **67 young people said they would prefer to have all support in person, whereas only 16 said they would prefer support to be entirely online.**

**Figure 10: Preferences between online and in person support by support type for S1-3 students**



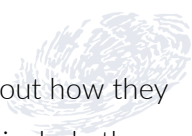
Young people who explained their response said the following, with a particular focus on the value of experiencing a potential future workplace in person:

“It would be better to have everything in person so you could envision yourself in the workplace and see if it is a compatible career for your personal preference.”

“Hands on experience is more effective than anything else.”

“If the work experience is for a job with a physical workplace then the experience should take place there too.”

“I feel the most benefit would be gained from these world of work events if they were held in person so that you were able to make an informed decision about your career path with the help of meeting people that work where you may potentially work and also seeing your potential workplace.”



Finally, young people in S4+ were asked if they wanted to share anything additional about how they want to learn about the world of work. Eight young people provided a response which include the following:

“If the things are online, maybe explain more what will be happening - is it for people to ask questions, will there be a presentation, a mix of both, will we have to use our cameras and interact? It can be difficult to judge what an online session will be like compared to an in person one, so as much information about it as possible would help encourage people joining.”

“[I would like] more specific / diverse advice. A lot of support I’ve been given isn’t relevant to me at all and I’ve just been told to do my own research instead of getting help”.

## 3.2 Interviews and focus groups with young people



### Summary of findings

- Young people appreciated the safety (from COVID-19) and convenience of virtual engagement
- Views on ease of completing work tasks remotely were mixed
- Virtual engagement suited some demographics more than others
- Virtual engagement did not impair learning, but technical problems did
- The social aspect of work experience and apprenticeships was hindered by virtual engagement
- Careers consisting of computer-based work were best suited to virtual engagement
- Certain aspects of virtual engagement work better than others
- Group sessions worked well in certain circumstances
- Virtual careers fairs worked best when young people had a choice about which sessions they could attend
- Events with a large number of attendees did not work as well online
- Videos are less engaging when used in virtual engagement with the world of work
- Online mentoring did not suit more disadvantaged young people
- Online career matching tools did not work very well
- Virtual tours and videos of work environments are unsatisfactory for young people
- Young people would appreciate basic education in core computer programs
- Most young people would prefer work related activities to be completely in person and blended for certain industries

The following section presents an analysis of the fieldwork with young people in relation to research questions. The topic guides are in Appendix 1.



### 3.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of virtual engagement

Young people appreciated the safety and convenience of virtual engagement. They were alert to the risks associated with in person working during the pandemic and felt that virtual engagement afforded relatively safety from COVID-19. While the risks of COVID-19 might be reduced in the future, young people do appreciate the need for virtual engagement in such situations.

However, despite the reduced risks of COVID-19 from virtual engagement, one young person was concerned about other negative health effects of virtual engagement from home.

“There’s a lot more benefits for being at the office because you walk around more and it makes you go outside and means you eat less because you’re not just a few steps from the fridge.”

Young people appreciated the convenience of doing virtual work experience and apprenticeships from home. The main factors they mentioned around convenience were reduced travel, lie ins and comfort. They appreciated not needing to factor in travel arrangements to experiences.

“It is flexible. I don’t need to find a time that works for travel ... much easier to book in meetings online than in person.”

The comfort of working from home was both physical and psychological.

“All of us felt more comfortable because we were in our homes in our normal clothes.”

“For me, I was quite nervous about going into the working environment, [virtual engagement] helped remove the area of unknown. I was still a bit nervous going into the office when I started in January.”

“I enjoyed working from home. Getting up at five to 9 was great.”

The other added conveniences of virtual engagement were the ability to communicate with employers worldwide without having to travel, but also on not missing out on the experience because travel would not have been possible.



“It’s better because you can talk to people in other countries, and you can work from anywhere.”

**Views on ease of completing work tasks remotely were mixed.** When tasks were felt to be tedious or tricky, some young people felt that it was easier to get the work done at home than in an educational setting or workplace, while others felt that they were likely to be distracted at home when doing tasks remotely.

“Working at my own pace online was great, I like just powering through tasks and getting it done so doing it online at home allowed me to do that.”

When communication with facilitators was required to complete a task, some young people thought that communication was better in person. This would allow a discussion around important tasks and deadlines which would act as a failsafe in the event that written communication was missed. Some also felt that responses would be quicker in person as they sometimes had 2 hour waits for a reply to a question.

“Communication suffers online, a lot of stuff gets lost in translation, like someone would get left off an email and not know about something. A deadline got moved and I didn’t know about it, that was hard. I think if it had been in person that wouldn’t have happened.”

“The assistance part, waiting an hour or two for a response isn’t great when you’re stuck on an exercise because there’s nothing else you can really do while you’re waiting for an answer. I think that would be different in person.”

Some young people interviewed also worried about not understanding work experience tasks when given online and felt that it would be easier to understand and work at your own pace and in person. Some felt that it just took time to get used to virtual engagement and getting support when needed.

“It took me a few weeks to get to grips with asking questions by sending a message or calling, some support on that front in the first few weeks would be good.”

Others found it easier to ask questions online as you could send private messages and not feel embarrassed about asking in front of peers.

“I think I’d find it more difficult in person. More private to ask questions by sending a wee message as in person it’s embarrassing having to put your hand up in front of everybody.”



Some young people also felt that they got more support and interaction online than they would have in person as with less time being spent moving between venues and activities being more efficient, leaders were more present for informal interaction.

“Because it was online I felt like I was getting even more support.”

“There were times when we were waiting for a speaker so they would just say, ‘Ask me anything?’ I got a lot from that because I could find out exactly what they did to get into [their career].”

**Virtual engagement suited some demographics more than others.** Young people who already struggled to engage with work related activities pre-pandemic felt that these activities were ‘more boring’ virtually than in person. In this demographic group, young people said that they would not engage online unless there was a teacher present.

“If sir wasn’t here, I wouldn’t be talking to you”.

Some young people were digitally excluded through the devices given to them by a council to combat digital exclusion. Young people reported that council issued tablets had many functional features blocked and so they were unable to actively participate in some online work experience, limiting the value of the experience.

“Using school iPad... meant stuff was locked and meant we couldn’t get in the chat. It made me feel a bit awkward because I was the only one talking because others could ask questions in the chat, but I couldn’t. There are some people that have been using school iPad for other work experience that can’t come off mute or use the chat. That makes the experience really bad for them.”

**Virtual engagement did not impair learning, but technical problems did.** Most young people felt that virtual engagement did not affect what they learned during the experience, however, some young people felt that their ability to learn at the same speed as their peers was impaired by IT problems. Technical issues also limited enjoyment of some virtual engagements. Virtual desktops were used to get around software license issues but when the virtual desktops did not work, some young people could not complete their tasks. Internet access was only reported as being an occasional barrier to engagement with virtual careers engagements. When it was a problem, some young people described it as stressful.





“For me, I don’t think I have missed out learning at all. I have done so much work, and lots of different types of work. I have actually done more than I have expected.”

“I would have learned a lot faster if it was in person... wouldn’t have had down time.”

You just never know, your Wi-Fi could cut out one day, that can cause stress, and you’re getting worried.”

Some skills learning was improved by virtual engagement. Young people mentioned that virtual apprenticeships and work experience taught other skills that in person careers experiences might not, such as time management and professionalism.


“It’s been different doing it from home – it has taught me a lot of skills as in time management, getting on the calls. It felt like a mature experience. I felt like I had to be extra professional.”

**The social aspect of work experience and apprenticeships was hindered by virtual engagement.** The majority of young people felt that the social side of work experience and apprenticeships is lost online, and they felt that lasting friendships were more likely to be made after meeting in person. Most young people also felt that when virtual engagement was necessary, it was easier to begin a programme by meeting people in person before working online together. However, where social anxiety was an issue, a minority of young people disagreed and felt that it was easier to have the initial interactions online.

“Although it was good online, it would have been much less awkward in person... They would all be there, you would all be sitting there next to each other, you would have got to talk to the others in between the sessions. Discussions were awkward, people were trying to unmute themselves...”

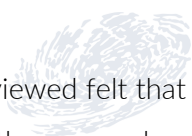
“Some people have anxiety of actually meeting new people in person... I actually found it very hard interacting online [because] it is so easy to just press mute... I think in the first day I said about 4 words online. “

### **3.2.2 Experiences that work well online**



Careers consisting of computer-based work were best suited to virtual engagement. Young people felt that virtual engagement worked well for careers and subjects that primarily consist of computer work where any work experience or apprenticeships would be working on a computer in a classroom or office, such as programming.

“A lot of technical training was online...he was walking us through it, then we would go through it. People went through it at different speeds which was annoying but would be the same in a classroom. I think it worked well online as we would be doing it on a computer in a classroom anyway.”



**Certain aspects of virtual engagement work better than others.** All young people interviewed felt that live interactive sessions were the best form of virtual engagement. Online session lengths are much better in shorter spells, both for videos and live sessions. Work experience and apprenticeships worked best when being given tasks, going away and coming back as opposed to sitting and listening all day. Mock interviews worked well online because they were one to one and meant that the young people didn't feel embarrassed due to their peers hearing them.

"We had a few 3 hour long exercises which was boring to say the least. Shorter bursts with things to do in between would work a lot better. "

"Sometimes when you're sitting on a computer in a call you drift away. It can be really hard to sit and stare at a screen all day. I like to keep my camera on to keep me focused. Being asked questions at the end also helps keeps you focused. Having a teacher facilitating groups definitely helps."


Many young people reported that having regular calls and check-ups was really useful for virtual work experience or apprenticeships.

"Having regular calls and check-ups worked well, to see how you're getting on. You feel nervous a wee bit at the start."

**Group sessions worked well in certain circumstances.** Young people felt that group work was tricky when beginning a programme online. They felt that ice breakers, smaller groups and having a leader facilitating to begin with were useful ways to help with these challenges. Several young people also reported that entirely virtual career engagements work better when they are part of a series that the same group of people attend each time as it gives more time to get to know the other people over and build relationships. This helps to make the teamwork exercises easier and the overall experience more enjoyable.

"I think the group work when it's just new it's easier in person. Small teams work well online so you're not by yourself all the time. I think live is better for making connections when you're just starting. I think a leader facilitating when you're starting... it was a bit awkward."

"Online works when you are doing a course with the same people over a prolonged period of time as you get to know people and how to ask questions. It is much harder when it's a one off thing."



**Virtual careers fairs worked best when young people had a choice about which sessions they could attend.** Some young people thought that careers fairs were best held in person because it afforded the opportunity to do hands on activities. Others thought that being online meant you had more time to talk to employers and that there was a wider range of employers who were able to attend. Young people mentioned that they specifically enjoyed an interactive virtual skills fair they did where they had an avatar to move around the virtual building that was laid out on a map like it was in person and got the opportunity to make choices about who they wanted to speak to. This approach seemed to work better as it appeared to be more engaging and enabled young people to interact with employers through this model.

### 3.2.3 Experiences that work less well online

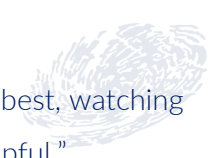
**Events with a large number of attendees did not work as well online.** Although young people felt that there were some benefits of attending big presentations online, such as anonymous polling and not having to put your hand up, there were more drawbacks to the experience. Young people felt it was frustrating when people delivering did not answer the questions that they put into the chat and that certain platforms could not support large numbers of people.

“I think I preferred this in person because you were in an audience and they were on a stage and you could ask questions... when it was online people would type questions but they wouldn’t get answered. I think it was better doing it in person because you didn’t have to make your question so structured in a way, you could explain it on the spot.”

**Videos are less engaging when used in virtual engagement with the world of work.** While videos were sometimes useful for watching back, they could not be asked questions which many young people struggled with.

“You get videos that are more boring than others, they are not made equal. If the person doing the video is interested, it is good, but talking in a monotone is not good. Short videos are better, you lose concentration and stop listening after 15 minutes.”

Videos were sometimes recycled, meaning that young people had to watch the same thing on more than one occasion. Videos were best used on the direction of facilitators as a resource for answering specific questions on how to complete a task.



“The wee courses with pre-recorded videos are boring. The live stuff was definitely best, watching videos directed by an adviser for things I was having problems with was helpful.”

**Online mentoring did not suit more disadvantaged young people.** Some young people felt that online mentoring worked well as it allowed more flexibility as to when sessions could be scheduled. For certain young people who did not have their own space in their home, online mentoring was not as useful, as they limited what they were saying due to being overheard by family members or distracted by siblings. One young person also said that virtual mentoring was ‘more boring’ as they would just talk. In person, their mentor would take them to do practical things such as baking in the home economics department. In person mentoring also allowed the young people to get out of their timetabled class which they enjoyed.

**Virtual tours and videos of work environments are unsatisfactory.** Most young people would like to physically see the work environment when doing work experience to get a full understanding of what the job entails. They reported that seeing videos of the workplace were not a satisfactory replacement. This was especially the case for careers that require regular usage of special uniforms or equipment as it was some of the nuances of it that were lost online such as the weight of equipment. Even those doing full apprenticeships did not get an idea of the work environment when engaging virtually.

“The main reason I did the apprenticeship is to get the work experience, and it’s not quite been the same. I can’t really tell whether or not I want to work in an office.”

“Getting to go somewhere would be good, getting away from home...going to see friends, being in a workspace... shows you, ‘Oh, this is where I could be working’.”

### **3.2.4 Views on the virtual engagement with the world of work post COVID-19**

Young people would appreciate training in core computer programmes to prepare for virtual engagement. Even young people who had gone into a computer-based apprenticeship felt that this would be of benefit.

"I wish my school did PowerPoint, Teams, Word documents. It would be good if they taught you how to make the most of Microsoft programmes."



**Most young people would prefer work related activities to be completely in person. However,** for IT related work activities, most young people would prefer a blend of online and in person.

"Half and half is perfect. The social side of 2 days a week in the office is enough... The initial stuff should always be in person, you feel a bit alienated online."

Work experiences and careers events that are enhanced by speakers based overseas or who do not have time to travel also benefit from being in part virtual.

"I think a bit of a blend would work. ... as an example, the first week would have been brilliant in person. But the business experience, we spoke to people from all across the world – Malaysia, USA.

If we were in person that would not be possible. So I think a blend would make it much more enjoyable and open up opportunities for interviews with people internationally that you couldn't do in an office."

For all other work experience activities, a minority would like a blended approach, but most young people would prefer the experiences to be completely in person.

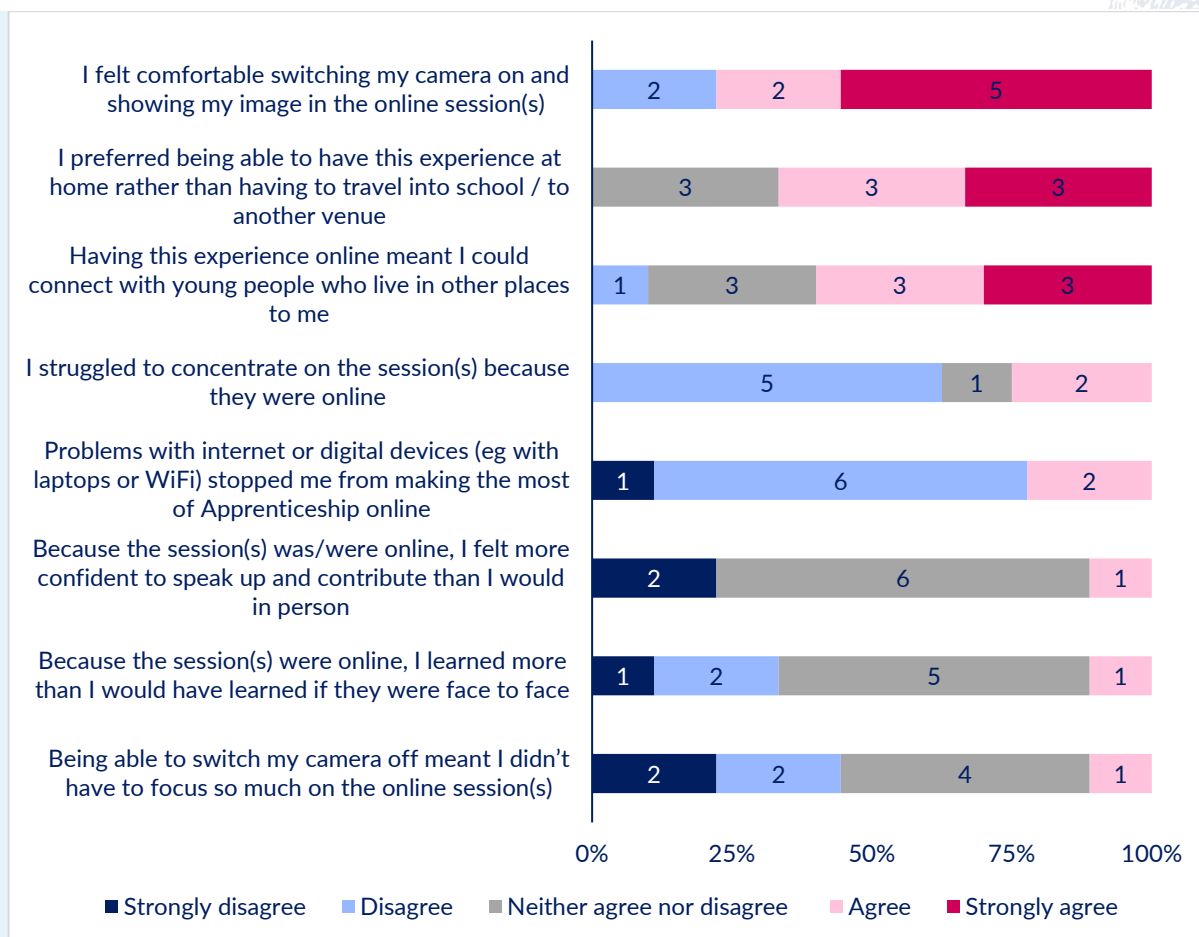


## Case Study – Apprenticeship online

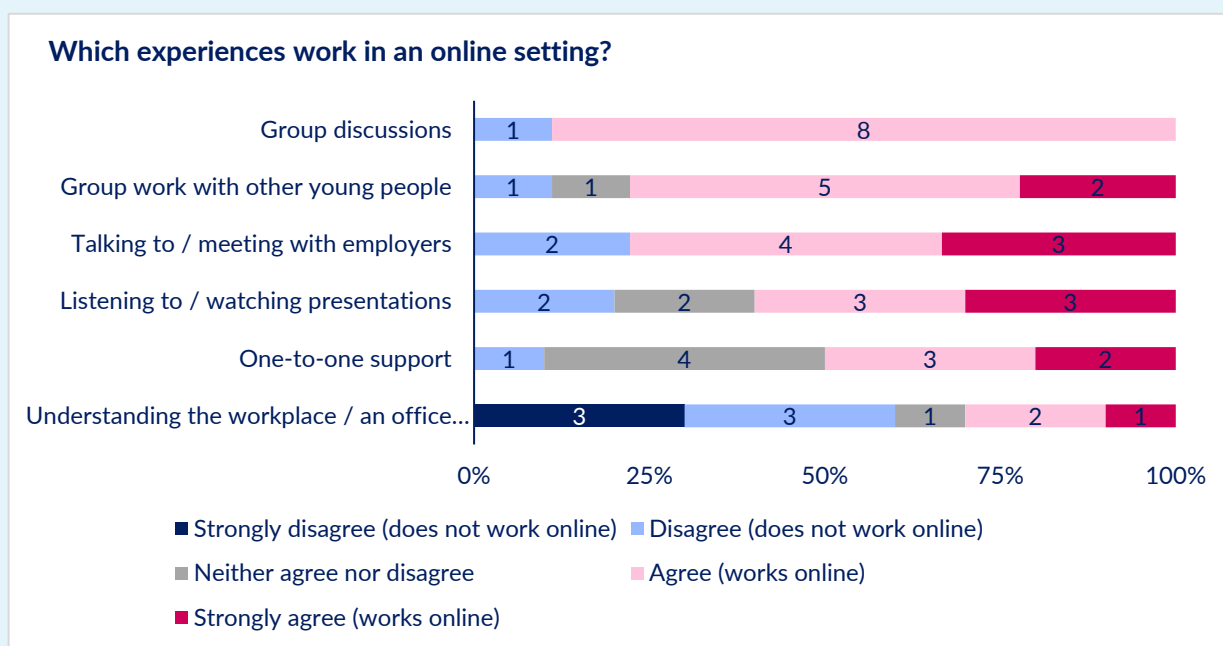
This is an apprenticeship for a group of young people who had already left school, so the findings are applicable to older students. It is run by a company that started just before the pandemic. The initial plan was to deliver everything face to face but when COVID-19 hit, they built a virtual learning platform and managed to continue operating throughout the pandemic. The course was designed with help from a university with experience in how people learn.

The apprenticeship consisted of initial training, which was online, followed by employment in the form of a paid apprenticeship which started remotely but took a blended form as restrictions eased. So participants had an experience of both forms of engagement. The subject of the apprenticeship was robotic process automation and so was primarily computer based. Interviews with young people who had taken part in apprenticeship online reflected the findings of the survey, further detail can be found in [Section 3.2](#).

- 10 students provided their views on their online apprenticeship through an online survey
- 7 thought the format of the experience (online / face to face) made little or no difference to what they gained from it. The three remaining students thought the experience would have been better face to face.
- Most appreciated not having to travel into school or a workplace to have the experience, and over half were able to connect with young people living in other areas
- Only 2 of the 10 respondents had problems with devices which made it difficult to engage
- Only one young person thought they learned more because the experience was online



Most thought that group discussions, group work with other young people and employer engagement works effective in an online setting. The only type of experience that most thought was not effective online was understanding a workplace or office environment.







Students were asked if the apprenticeship online should continue online, in person, or as a blended model after COVID-19. **All students thought the apprenticeship should have a blend of online and face to face working.** They said that there were benefits to both,

“A blend of both means that you are not always watched over and pressured, I believe you learn more in a relaxed situation rather than an intense one which can be an office environment when you're new.”

“I very much enjoyed and preferred online learning.”

“It does get a bit too much being only online so having in person is still good.”

They stated the importance of having clear communication with people running the apprenticeship when working remotely.



### Case study: Police online

The Police online work experience was designed in response to COVID-19 and was an adaption of work placements that had been run in person in previous years. Those running the work experience had spoken to local young people to determine the best format for virtual work experience. The coordinators of the work experience felt that providing the experience online allowed it to reach many more young people. They managed to take 54 young people in the time that they would normally only manage 12.

Young people felt that there were some benefits from it being online, such as more time to ask the hosts questions, but that overall they missed out on many of the hands on experiences that policing involves such as uniforms, handcuffs and dog handling. The findings of the survey reflect the interview findings, further detail can be found in [Section 3.2](#).

- 5 young people in S3-S6 provided their views on Police Online through a survey
- All 5 thought the experience would have been better if it had been face to face
- 4 young people thought that once restrictions allow, the Police Online work placement should be entirely in person. 1 thought a blended approach would be best. The young person who suggested a blended approach said the following:

“I’d like to spend as much time as possible seeing what it’s like working for Police Scotland and visit as many of the different units as we can in the 5 days. Maybe add a call [before the placement] for an hour to discuss what we would be doing... also another online call [after the placement] to go over the task if there was one and for any last questions.”

- Young people said support was more engaging in person, and that they found it easier to focus in this setting.
- One young person identified as being neurodivergent (having ADHD) and that therefore in person support would be better, as this would help them to concentrate more.

“The three main hosts we had were nice and if we were to have it again it would be nice to meet them in person and have them as the main hosts for the week while meeting others.”

## 4. Implications for current and future provision



This section considers the implications for current and future virtual world of work experiences and provides several conclusions and recommendations for DYW to consider based on the research undertaken. This section is set out under the following 5 headings:

- What makes a good virtual learning experience related to the world of work?
- Benefits and drawbacks of virtual delivery?
- How do benefits and drawbacks vary by the type of experience involved?
- How do benefits and drawbacks vary by groups of young people?
- Virtual experience offers for young people after COVID-19? What could blended learning look like?

### 4.1 What makes a good virtual learning experience related to the world of work?

#### 4.1.1 Involving young people in the design of virtual opportunities can boost engagement

Providing choices to young people based on their interests, and then sourcing opportunities based on their preferences can improve virtual engagement. Online provision increases the potential range of employers and geographical reach, therefore there is increased scope for tailoring experiences to young people's preferences. Stakeholders noted that in general, more work was required to get young people to engage online than in person, and this should be recognised in the design and structure of virtual engagements.

**Recommendation 1a:** DYW coordinators and schools should co-design virtual engagement with young people, with a particular focus on understanding career sectors and employers of interest. This might take the format of a rapid survey of young people in school or informal focus groups.

**Recommendation 1b:** DYW coordinators should actively engage with staff and teachers to build on identified areas of interest and match to current employers, developing new relationships where needed.

## 4.1.2 Create interactive and engaging virtual world of work experiences



Young people and stakeholders gave feedback on the features of online delivery that make for a more engaging experience. These included:

- Structuring sessions with a blend of on and off camera work
- Interactive elements wherever possible
- Young people find live events more engaging than pre-recorded events
- Some young people and stakeholders reflected that day-long online careers events were too intense for young people and led to disengagement. Shorter online sessions were preferred.

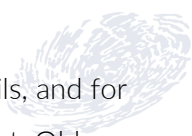
Giving young people control over the virtual experience can improve engagement. Some examples include co-designing virtual engagements with young people or using innovative technologies such as controlling an avatar who visits a virtual career fair, choosing to learn about careers that most interest them.

Employers need support to understand how to create engaging experiences for young people. This includes ensuring engagements are interactive and tailored to the particular group of young people. When using presentations, employers and facilitation staff should use minimal text focussing on embedding images and video content into slides.

**Recommendation 2:** Where designing virtual engagements, or evaluating existing models, ensure they are interactive, live and include a blend of on and off camera work where appropriate. Consideration should be given to young people's capacity for continuous focus, dependent on their age and any additional needs. A checklist to support with this can be found in [Section 4.5](#).

**Recommendation 3:** Provide employers with more intensive support on how to create engaging experiences. This can be part of the relationship that DYW coordinators and other staff build with employers. This includes sharing best practice such as models for engagements that employers can work within, or a bank of resources to draw upon.

## 4.1.3 Young people benefit from having a facilitator supporting engagement with virtual delivery.



The benefit of having a facilitator to support group delivery is notable for younger pupils, and for students who are less engaged with the world of work and/or require additional support. Older students are typically more able to engage with online support independently by logging onto a video call on their own device. However, they still require support with technology and engaging with the experience. This is particularly important when young people are working on tasks independently eg in a virtual work placement or online apprenticeship. Tying virtual engagement to the curriculum can also improve engagement.

Staff and employers delivering and facilitating virtual engagement need a particular set of skills and qualities to create an impactful experience. Teachers or other staff facilitating need the time to be able to dedicate energy to making the experience work, to set the scene and tone for young people.

Infrastructure and technologies required for online engagement need to be high quality and functional, with staff who have the training and confidence to set up and use technology.

**Recommendation 4:** DYW coordinators and staff to continue to link employers and schools to co-design experiences and ensure they are embedded into the curriculum and timetable.

**Recommendation 5:** Ensure virtual engagements are facilitated in person by someone in the classroom, such as a DYW coordinator or teacher, to promote engagement. This is particularly important for groups of young people who might require more support to engage (eg younger students or those with additional support needs).

**Recommendation 6:** Ensure DYW coordinators and teachers are confident in digital skills, including using interactive technology. Provide opportunities for upskilling where necessary.



## 4.2 Benefits and drawbacks of virtual delivery

### 4.2.1 Virtual delivery engages a wider range of young people and employers

Numerous stakeholders, including DYW coordinators, discussed the benefits of virtual experiences in exposing young people to employers and opportunities in areas which would be inaccessible in person. This benefit applies to all young people but is particularly pertinent to those living in rural and remote areas who otherwise could not access opportunities. Stakeholders also noted the importance of retaining exposure to local employers in rural areas, acknowledging the importance of balancing broadening horizons with ensuring young people who want to stay local have opportunities to explore local careers.

Online engagement can encourage more employers to volunteer their time, as it affords them increased flexibility and is arguably less time consuming. It can also result in a wider range of employers being prepared to deliver to young people. However, it is important to ensure that the engagement remains impactful, with the main focus on ensuring young people benefit from the experience rather than on supporting employers to reach corporate social responsibility targets.

**Recommendation 7:** DYW coordinators to have a diverse portfolio of local and national opportunities available for young people, based around young people's requirements.

**Recommendation 8:** DYW staff and coordinators to consult with schools to ensure the geographical offer reflects each school / region's priority.

## 4.2.2 Young people find it more difficult to build relationships with others via online engagements



Online engagements present a trade-off in terms of opportunities for young people to socialise with others. While it is generally perceived as more difficult to build rapport and connect socially with others online, online engagements provide exposure to a wider range of other young people in terms of their backgrounds and their geographical areas.

**Recommendation 9:** For longer virtual engagements such as work experience or apprenticeships, provide young people with a blended offer where possible, with opportunities to meet both online and in person. It will be important to take the school and young person's views on this into consideration, in addition to geographical factors.


## 4.2.3 Young people prefer engaging with the world of work in person.

Young people generally think online support cannot substitute for “hands on” experience of the world of work, and most stakeholders broadly agree. They acknowledge that there are some elements of online support which should be retained in a blended model **Virtual experiences should always add value compared to what could be done in person, enhancing the offer around the world of work.**

Very few young people want to keep online work activities totally virtual, and some would be happy with a blended approach, depending on the topic and sector. Some sectors or work lends themselves better to virtual delivery such as digital/tech, as opposed to the care sector or engineering. Stakeholders agree that a blended approach would be beneficial – important that young people get both face to face and virtual world of work experience to reflect what is currently happening in the workplace and what is likely to continue in the future.

**Recommendation 10:** Online engagement should be used to *enhance* the offer around the world of work. Online engagement should not be used as an alternative, if there is evidence to suggest that it will be less impactful and engaging for the young people who receive it, and it is possible to deliver in person.

## 4.3 How do benefits and drawbacks vary by the type of experience involved?



Although stakeholders were asked to describe the benefits for young people of different virtual experiences, almost all those interviewed mentioned that there are important considerations regardless of which experience is being delivered, such as those outlined in conclusions 4.1.1 – 4.1.4. It was much harder to pinpoint which types of experience lend themselves to virtual delivery more than others.

**Recommendation 11:** Each learning experience should be considered on a case by case basis to determine whether virtual can enhance the offer. The checklist in Section 4.5 can be used to guide this decision-making process.

### **4.3.1 Young people generally prefer in person work placements and apprenticeships.**

Overall, work experience is preferred in person, particularly for careers that are mostly done in person and require hands on experience. Even for those based in offices, being able to see the work environment and interact with peers completing the experience is beneficial in person. Most young people would prefer to meet in person prior to any form of work experience or apprenticeship to help develop relationships with the other young people.

Stakeholders and young people acknowledged that there is value in virtual work placements, particularly for young people who live in remote areas who would otherwise not be able to access a diverse range of workplaces. For longer term placements and apprenticeships, a blended model ensures young people can interact with others and gain some hands-on experience, while benefitting from reduced requirements for travel and developing vital digital skills which will likely be required in most workplaces in the future. Some stakeholders suggested.

### **4.3.2 Views on the value of other types of virtual engagement are nuanced.**

In the national survey, young people identified one to one mentoring as being particularly effective in person, in terms of building rapport. Some young people said that a blended model could be appropriate for mentoring, with some opportunities to meet in person to support relationship building.

There are some examples in the network of effective translation of **careers fairs** into an online setting. These work best when young people have control over which employers they learn about.



Using avatars to explore a virtual map and select sectors and employers was well received by young people.



Young people can benefit from **mock interviews** being held online, as this format means a range of employers can be brought together for short interviews. This prepares young people for online interviews which are likely to form part of workplace recruitment for some time.

**Videos about the world of work**, for example of YouTube are not rated highly as an engaging way to learn about careers. In the national survey, this was rated as the least effective type of virtual experience, and stakeholders and young people said they risk being recycled with young people exposed to the same video multiple times. However, for some sectors, these can be useful, for example exploring a workplace when hands on experience isn't possible. The success of these videos stands or falls on how engaging the presenter is, and how young people are supported to engage with the content.

The suitability of retaining different types of delivery in an online setting post-COVID should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.



## 4.4 How do benefits and drawbacks vary by groups of young people?

Clear benefits and drawbacks of virtual work experiences emerged from research with stakeholders and young people. These are summarised below from 4.3.1 – 4.4.3. Young people should be consulted to help determine what the right approach for virtual delivery is for them and to help them overcome the barriers to engagement they might face.

**Recommendation 13:** Each learning experience should be considered on a case by case basis to determine whether virtual can enhance the offer for different groups of young people, such as those who face digital poverty, disadvantage, or who are disabled or additional support needs. The checklist in Section 4.5 can be used to guide this decision-making process.


### 4.4.1 Being at home can be a barrier to engaging with online support

Young people have a range of home learning environments which can make remote, online learning challenging for them. Some young people do not have access to a private space at home, making it difficult to find space and time to engage with the world of work. In addition, they might have to share devices with parents or older siblings who are working, making it difficult for them to attend live virtual sessions.

**Recommendation 14:** It will be important for DYW coordinators to gain a full understanding of each experience offered to young people within their schools, the time commitments and expectations of young people. This will help ensure that they are able to participate in the desired experiences and are not excluded as a result of their home working environments or their access to devices.

### 4.4.2 Young people with barriers to engagement should be considered when designing and delivering a virtual experience

Stakeholders and young people reported challenges with engagement where young people relied on state-provided devices. In some cases, these young people missed out on some experiences due to the limited functionality of these devices. Digital poverty is increasingly becoming an important



priority for the Scottish Government and COVID-19 has accelerated the need for digital poverty to be addressed. As much as possible a hybrid or virtual experience should be universal, but consideration needs to be made if some young people are not able to access live events.

The same consideration should be given to young people who have additional support needs, are disabled, or are disadvantaged. DYW coordinators and schools need to understand the needs of these young people to be able to support them, and should design inclusive virtual experiences which are cognisant that there may be students participating with non-disclosed disabilities and disadvantages.

Overall, 34% of young people responding to the survey stated that they have struggled to engage with online activities due to problems with digital devices. This is likely an underestimation of the national picture given the demographics of the survey responders - few respondents came from SIMD 1 or 2.

**Recommendation 15:** To ensure a universal virtual offer can be delivered to all young people, DYW coordinators and schools should work with young people to identify ways in which they can overcome some of these challenges. The checklist in Section 4.5 can be used to guide this decision-making process.

**Recommendation 16:** DYW to continue supporting Scottish Government policy on digital poverty moving to one device per young person.

## 4.5 Virtual experience offers for young people after COVID-19?

### What could blended learning look like?

Virtual delivery should always be used to enhance the young person's experience, with the benefits for young people at the core of the decision between virtual, in person or blended delivery. Overall, the suitability of using virtual delivery post-COVID-19 should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. When making these decisions, DYW can reflect on the following list of questions to determine the value of virtual in a specific context:

#### Checklist for virtual experiences:

- ☐ Will using virtual experiences broaden horizons for the young people? For example, will it expose them to employers / workplaces they would not otherwise be able to access?
- ☐ Can measures be put in place to ensure disadvantaged young people, and those with additional support needs have equal access to the virtual experience?
- ☐ Has the employer been supported to design virtual engagement that is interactive and engaging?
  - ☐ And can it be accessed on multiple devices to the same standard and quality of experience.
- ☐ Is there a member of staff (eg DYW coordinator / teacher) who has the time energy and skills to support young people to engage with the experience?
- ☐ Does DYW / the school / the employer have the digital infrastructure, time and space to deliver the experience virtually?
- ☐ Overall, will adding a virtual element enhance the experience for young people?
- ☐ Are the outcomes and expectations of young people clear and proportionate?
  - ☐ Is the engagement meaningful and positive for young people?
- ☐ Does it clearly link with their curriculum and / or age appropriate world of work opportunities?

# Appendix 1 – Research method and resources



## Methodology

This evaluation is based on research carried out between March and July 2021 using the following methodology:

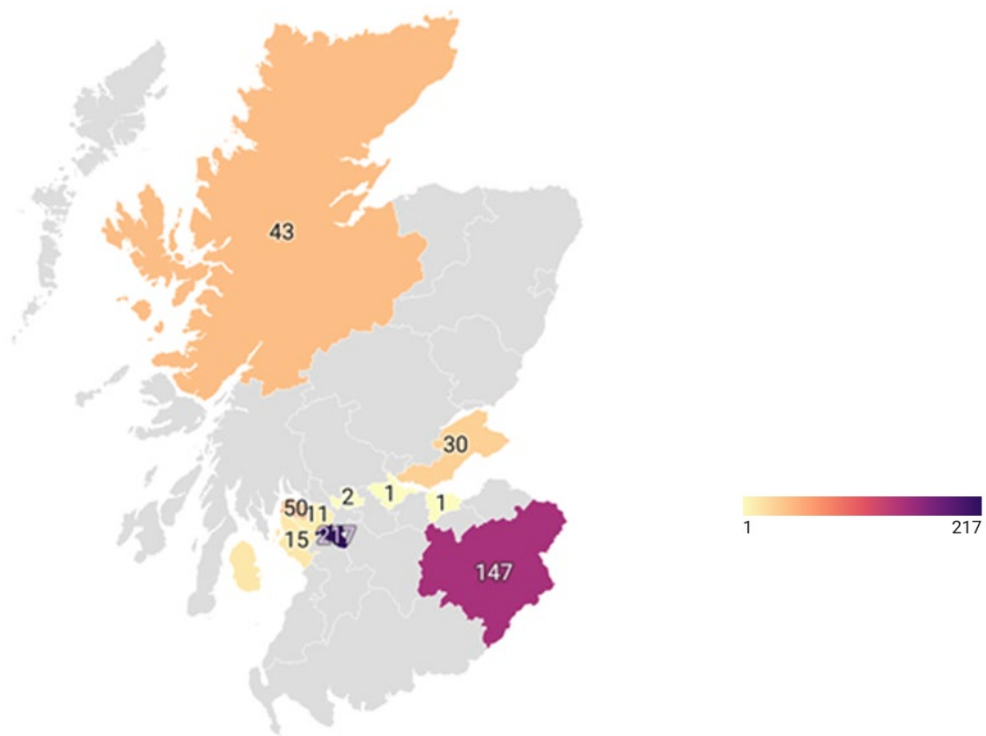
Summary		
1.	National Survey	A national survey was shared with schools across Scotland in 2021. 518 young people responded to the survey from 38 schools across 10 local authorities. Students from year groups S1-S6 responded to the survey, in addition to some young people who had recently left school. Analysis of data from the national survey is detailed in <a href="#">Section 3.1</a> .
2.	Interviews and focus groups with young people	Young people who had engaged with a specific virtual engagement related to the world of work participated in interviews and focus groups. The interviews and focus groups were conducted from May 2021 – July 2021. Some young people also completed surveys about individual virtual experiences to provide additional depth to this element of the research. Detail of the numbers of young people who engaged with this element of the fieldwork is provided below. Analysis of fieldwork with young people is detailed in <a href="#">Section 3.2</a> .
3.	Best practice interviews – staff and stakeholders	31 stakeholders from across industry, education and schools were interviewed to get a sense of what was being delivered online and the impact of this approach for young people across schools, further education and colleges. This included 7 DYW coordinators and 4 DYW leads (Edinburgh and the Lothians, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, Glasgow, and Dumfries and Galloway). Analysis of interviews with stakeholders is detailed in <a href="#">Section 2</a> .

## Field work with young people



Young people either took part in interviews or focus groups, depending on age, digital access and preferences of school coordinators. All interviews and focus groups took place via video call using MS Teams. In total, 20 young people participated in either an interview or a focus group. A further 14 young people contributed to tailored surveys about specific virtual experiences. A breakdown of engagements by virtual engagement type is provided in the below table.

Virtual engagement	Number of young people engaging in interviews	Number of young people engaging in focus groups	Responses to tailored survey
Police online work placement	1		5
Apprenticeship online	6	-	10
Glasgow Science Centre Virtual Foundation Apprenticeship	1	-	-
Online Foundation Apprenticeship	2	-	2
Duncanrigg Secondary School Values	-	6	-
MCR pathways	-	5	-
Career Ready	-	12	-



Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2019 • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure A1: Map of survey respondents by local authority area**

# Topic Guides



## Young person interview topic guide

### Introduction

*Hi, it's [NAME] from Rocket Science. Your DYW coordinator [NAME] said you've agreed to speak to me about some research we're doing for DYW.*

*I'd like to talk to you today about your views on learning about the world of work online. This year, because of covid, you'll have probably been learning about jobs and careers online rather than in person – is that right? [Give some examples to clarify]*

*I'm going to ask you some questions about those experiences – what was good, what could have been improved, and how those experiences have helped you think about what you want to do when you leave school.*

*Anything you tell me will be kept completely anonymous. I just have a few questions about your experiences, but you only need to answer the questions you want to and you can stop the interview at any time. Is that ok?*

**First I have a few questions to ask to find out a bit more about you...**

1. What year group are you in?
2. What is the name of your school, and where is it located?
3. Could you tell me a bit about the access you have to devices at home for doing school related activities? For example, if you have access to a laptop or tablet for this, and if you share it with others? *Prompt for:*
  - Has your **access to devices** ever been a problem that has meant you couldn't do school related activities like learning about the world of work?
  - Has your **internet access** ever been a problem that has meant you couldn't do school related activities like learning about the world of work?





## Types of virtual engagement the young person has taken part in

4. Can you tell me about any online experiences you have had over the last year? *Prompt for:*

- Mentoring?
- Presentations from employers?
- Work experience?
- Videos about the world of work?
- Help developing skills for work eg building CV, interview prep?
- Apprenticeship?

I'm going to take those examples you've given and ask you some more questions about each one in turn now...

5. What did you think about having this experience online as opposed to having it in person?

*Prompt for:*

- Did the experience work online? What helped it work online?
- Did some parts of it work well online and other parts less well? Why was that?
- Why is online / in person better for this experience?
- What, if anything needs to change to improve the experience and value of this type of online support?
- Do you think you would have learned more / gained more from the experience if it was in person? If so, why?
- Should this experience continue to be provided online in the future? Or some parts of it?

## Views on different ways to experience the world of work virtually

6. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of experiences being delivered online? *Prompt for:*

- Accessibility and flexibility
- Can record and catch up later
- Some may feel more comfortable
- Can do it at my own pace
- People who can't get to school or a workplace can be involved

7. What do you think online experiences need to be like to work well? *Prompt for:*



- Should they be interactive?
- Should they be live?
- Should they be a certain length?
- Should there be a teacher present?
- Should they be one to one, or in a group?
- Should they be linked together, like a course, or just one-off events?

8. Do you think there are particular types of experience that are better online? What are they and why?

9. And...are there particular types of experience that are better when delivered personally? What are they and why?

#### **Final questions**

10. In the future, what do you think would be the best way to get support related to the world of work – online or face to face?

- What should be kept online and why?
- What should not continue online and why?
- Views on using a blended model?

11. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience of online learning that we haven't covered?

Thanks so much for taking the time to speak to us today – it is really appreciated.

## Young person focus group topic guide



### Introduction

- Introductions and rapport building

The aim of this focus group is to gather your views on [virtual engagement type] including:

- Your experience of [virtual engagement type]
- Your views on getting this type of support online, what the benefits and drawbacks are of getting this [experience] online as opposed to face to face

### Housekeeping

- Informed consent refresh - discuss confidentiality / anonymity
- Instructions on how the session will be run, including process for asking questions, getting our attention etc
- Any questions before we start?
- Introductions

1. Can you tell me about [experience] you have all been involved with? What type of support have you received? *Prompt for:*

- How did you hear about it?
- How was it delivered? Eg group / one to one? Teacher / employer there?
- How long for?
- What are the goals / what does the experience aim to help you with?

Now we're going to think about the value of having this [experience] / [these kind of experiences] online as opposed to having it/them in person

3. What did you think about having this experience online rather than in person? *Prompt for:*

- Benefits and drawbacks of online for this type of experience
- How would it have been better / worse if it had happened face to face?
- How having the experience online affected engagement – was it easier / harder to focus?
- How do you feel about being on camera and contributing to online discussions? More or less confident than doing this face to face?
- How having the experience online affected building connections with other young people
- How has digital access had an impact on the experience eg problems with internet connection, accessing devices

4. How do you think having the experience online affected how much you were able to learn from it / its impact? *Prompt for*

- What you gained from the experience and how this was affected by it being online

5. More generally, what do you think online experiences need to be like to work well? *Prompt for:*

- Should they be interactive?
- Should they be live?
- Should they be a certain length?
- Should there be a teacher present?
- Should they be one to one, or in a group?
- Should they be linked together, like a course, or just one-off events?

6. Post-covid, do you think some elements of online support should be retained? *Prompt for:*

- What should be kept and why?
- What should not continue and why?
- Views on using a blended model?

### Final questions

7. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience of online learning that we haven't covered?

Thanks so much for taking the time to speak to us today – it is really appreciated.

### Stakeholder – best practice interviews



## Introduction and purpose

- Value of virtual engagement – world of work
- Finding out more about what the virtual offer looks like for young people at the moment

1. Please could you tell me a bit about your role and remit?
2. As mentioned, we are interested in finding out more about the scope and scale and value of local virtual engagement of young people with the world of work (organised through DYW or schools, or by intermediaries or employers). Could you give me an overview of what you have been able to offer young people this year?
  - a. Probe for how programme was delivered, including length of time, number of engagements?
  - b. What elements of the virtual delivery / aspects of the programme has worked well / hasn't?
    - i. To what extent were there differences for different groups of young people?  
eg age, demographics, SEN status, level of disadvantage etc
3. Local examples of effective practice and innovation in virtual engagement
  - a. What do think is working particularly well?
  - b. Examples of case studies or evaluations of local approaches that we can draw on
  - c. What does this tell us about what virtual is good at doing – and for whom?
4. As we emerge from the pandemic, what kind of experiences should be retained as virtual experiences, and for whom? (For DYW coordinators – ask specifically for what DYW should consider)
  - a. What kind of experiences are better virtually, and why?
  - b. How can virtual experiences best be used as part of a wider mix of engagements?

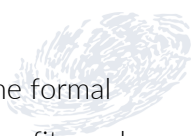
## Stakeholder - scoping interviews



### Introduction and purpose

- Value of virtual engagement – world of work
  - Finding out more about what the virtual offer looks like for young people at the moment
  - To inform the design of the national survey
1. Please could you tell me a bit about your role and remit?
  2. As mentioned, we are interested in finding out more about the Scope and scale of local virtual engagement of young people with the world of work (organised through DYW or schools, or by intermediaries or employers). Could you give me an overview of what is happening **in your area**?
  3. Local examples of effective practice and innovation
    - a. What do think is working particularly well?
    - b. Examples of case studies or evaluations of local approaches that we can draw on
  4. What do you think are the main barriers / obstacles to positive virtual engagement?
  5. Young people – what would you be focusing on in a survey of this nature (ie value of virtual engagement) – for your area – what has been happening?
    - *Prompt for Structure, Format, distribution*

## Appendix 2 – Learning from Rocket Science's work



A formal literature search was performed as well as a search of the grey literature. In the formal literature search, the available resources look more broadly around remote working (benefits and challenges) and specific sectors, but not specifically at young people, work experience, or even those entering the labour market for the first time. The grey literature offers many resources explaining what virtual work experience is and guides for how to run one, but none of these appear to be evidence based and there are no evaluations or research of existing programmes in the public domain. While we can identify examples of what is being done, it is currently difficult to say what represents good practice.

From our experience of evaluating a range of employability programmes over the course of the pandemic, and in the absence of widely available literature, we have produced a case study based on our experiences of employability services for young people for DYW to consider

#### **Elements that have worked for online delivery for young people:**

- Having essential information in digital format, especially for younger demographics, means it is readily accessible and easy to find, even if accessing the service from their mobile phones.
- Online experiences (ie services, work experiences, etc) must be user friendly. Suggestions from across our research suggests the following
  - Bite size learning
  - Facilitated sessions with short, snappy interactive consultation and engagement
  - Use of equivalent digital facilitation tools and techniques such as white boards, mural, menti-meter, break out rooms and so on.
- Provide additional support for young people who are not used to accessing information online e.g. young people who don't have technological devices or broadband or have additional support needs.
- Provide alternative opportunities and information in a range of formats for young people as they value being able to choose how they engage with a service or experience (ie what platform to use, such as zoom, teams, WhatsApp, messenger, or device options).
- Develop online experiences with the target group in mind from the beginning will ensure that the work experiences are better suited to the audience. If you are developing something new, integrate a user testing phase into the design to check if this service would work with the target group.



- Plan ahead for online sessions to ensure that young people have the suitable equipment needed eg young people joining calls on phones and therefore unable to see presentation slides, or unable to access websites and essential software.
- Keep communication simple where possible eg a WhatsApp group for peer researchers but make sure to provide one alternative method of communication in cases of inaccessibility.
- Online delivery will increase the reach of the experience / event. It will open up opportunities to some groups of young people who would not have engaged or found it difficult to engage in face to face settings (overcomes some barriers such as costs of transportation, range of different employers, confidence etc).



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