

A woman and a man, both wearing safety glasses and dark blue polo shirts, are leaning over a workbench in a workshop. The woman is on the left, looking intently at a task. The man is on the right, pointing towards the work area. The background is a wooden wall. The image is framed by a blue diagonal shape on the left and an orange diagonal shape on the right.

spark!
KICK
STARTING
CAREERS

The Way to Work

Work Experience programme

About Spark!

Spark! is a charity working across west London, improving young people's employment prospects since 2010.

Our vision is of a society in which all young people are ready, equipped, motivated, and able to enter the world of work.

Our mission is to ensure all young people, particularly those who will most benefit, have access to meaningful employer engagement, work readiness skills development, and employment opportunities, enabling them to transition into sustained work and rewarding careers.

We work in partnership with schools and colleges, and alongside a large and diverse range of employers and funders, to enhance young people's employability skills, knowledge, and experience, so that they are better prepared for and able to effectively transition into the workplace, finding and keeping a job.

We do this by enabling and supporting long-term relationships between local businesses and education:

- delivering a range of **employer engagement and employability skills development** opportunities
- creating **high quality work experience** placements and internships
- brokering and empowering inspiring **career mentoring relationships**
- providing access to an **online employability and careers portal**
- supporting **transitions into work**

You can read more about Spark! and our work at www.sparkcharity.org.uk.

Need for 'The Way to Work' programme

1. There's an **increase in demand** for high-quality work experience placements

Many young people have missed out recently on these vital opportunities, and while schools and colleges are working hard to catch-up, there remains a need to continue support for younger students coming through, to meaningfully engage with employers and employees.

2. There is a **reduction in supply** of high-quality work experience placements

Despite the majority of employers stating school leavers lack the experience they need, with remote and hybrid working environments rapidly becoming the norm, fewer employers are able to host young people for extended periods of time.

3. Many **young people lack the social capital or know-how** they need to source their own work experience

While many students have access to the connections and confidence to arrange their own placements, some will need support and guidance to access these opportunities. 'The Way to Work' focusses resources and time on those young people who most need the support.

4. We need to ensure available opportunities are accessible **for those who will benefit the most**

'The Way to Work' prioritises KS4 and KS5 students with uncertain post-education destinations, those identified as being at risk of becoming NEET, and students with pupil premium.

5. Many **schools and colleges rely on external providers** to source and manage work placements

'The Way to Work' is designed to give schools and colleges the support, expertise and resources they need, to develop and implement a sustainable work experience programme, every year.

The Way to Work Structure

The Way to Work programme has two distinct strands, designed to provide enhanced support to your students identified as being at risk during their transitions into employment, and supporting your whole school/college to develop and implement a sustainable work experience programme.

Strand A

High level of support for young people furthest from the labour market

QUALITY WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

We will source bespoke placements (typically 3 to 5 days) for a targeted group of **up to 30 KS4 or KS5** students, identified as most likely to benefit. We will carry out risk assessments, and plan high quality meaningful experiences for all parties.

PRE-WORK EXPERIENCE WORKSHOPS

We will facilitate a 2 hour in-school/college workshop designed to prepare students for their placements, develop vital employability skills, and ensure they are able to get the most out of their opportunity.

POST-WORK EXPERIENCE WORKSHOPS

We will facilitate a 2 hour in-school/college workshop designed to support reflective practice, further develop students employability skills, and to establish career aspirations, goals, and pathways into work.

Strand B

Develop and support schools/colleges with their high quality work experience programmes

YEAR GROUP ASSEMBLIES AND PRESENTATIONS

We will present to large student groups (and parents/guardians), on the value of work experience, and how best to maximise networks and social capital to secure work experience opportunities.

STAFF TRAINING AND RESOURCES

We will provide CPD/consultancy, to develop labour market knowledge, and how to effectively source and manage placements. We will also provide resources, inc. student workbooks, letter templates, placement structures and policies.

WORK EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

We will risk-assess all work experience placements, and help with project management, to streamline the process of allocating and managing placements for whole year group cohorts.

Next steps

If you are interested in finding out more, or discussing 'The Way to Work', programme please get in touch with our Head of Programmes, Georgia Ford on georgiaford@sparkcharity.org.uk.



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