

EDUCATION

BUSINESS

PARTNERSHIP. SOCIAL

IMPACT. 28 YEARS OF

TRANSFORMING

LIVES AND CREATING

GROWTH. PROMISE

AND OPPORTUNITY

FOR ALL. SOCIAL

VALUE REPORTING.

FAIR AND EQUITABLE

OPPORTUNITY. 2026

IMPACT. A GROWING

LIVERPOOL CITY

REGION.

ELEVATE

The Education Business Partnership

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WELCOME TO OUR IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY REPORT

Creating opportunities for young people has never been more important!

The number of young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) has been widely covered in the national media in recent months, bringing renewed attention to the challenges young people face moving from education towards employment.

Behind the headlines is a bigger conversation about what happens before a young person reaches that point, and how the experiences they have, the people they meet, their confidence, needs, mental health, and the opportunities they're able to access can shape how prepared and motivated they feel for what comes next.

Many of the areas that have been central to our EBP's work for decades are now receiving much greater national attention. *Alan Milburn's Young people and work: interim report (the Milburn Review)* has brought focus to youth unemployment and the barriers young people face, finding that only **35% felt confident they had relevant work experience for employment**. The new *Enrichment Framework* places greater emphasis on accessible, high-quality enrichment, whilst developments around the *Gatsby Benchmarks*, *The Careers and Enterprise Company's Equalex Framework* and topics such as work experience are reinforcing the importance of meaningful and repeated contact with employers and the workplace.

That is why, this year, we've chosen to evolve from our usual Impact Report format to this **Impact and Opportunity Report**. Within these pages, we'll still share the scale of what has been achieved through our work, but **we also want to look beyond the numbers to what these opportunities mean for the young people, educators, and employers taking part, and how that fits into the national picture.**

Young people have fed back that they've discovered new careers, better understood the world of work and what employers expect, developed confidence and skills, and taken part in experiences that helped them think differently about their future.

We're proud to be part of a network of thousands of employers, educators, and organisations across the Liverpool City Region who are working together to create important opportunities for local young people. Our role as an **Education Business Partnership** is to be the bridge between those worlds: helping schools and colleges access employers, helping businesses engage meaningfully with the next generation, and making sure those opportunities reach the people who can benefit from them most.

THE NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

Every number on this page represents a young person accessing an opportunity they may otherwise never have experienced!

This year, our programmes and partnerships have created thousands of opportunities for young people to meet employers, explore careers, experience the world of work, take part in enrichment, and prepare for their future. Every figure across this page represents an experience made possible by our education and business links.



89,249

interactions between young people in education and employers from our network¹.

227

NEET² young people engaged or engaging with Elevate EBP's services.



27,690

learner attendances across our Children's University Masterclasses.

¹ Interactions between young people and employers are calculated based on the **minimum** number of encounters at events such as Practice Interviews, Meet the Professionals, Careers Fairs, Masterclasses etc. ² NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). ³ Based on our Social Return on Investment figures for work experience and practice interviews.

1,231

local employers supported young people by working with our EBP.



18,066

primary school pupils enrolled in Children's University across Sefton, Liverpool, Wirral, Lancashire, and Warrington.



2,861

young people completed a week's worth of work experience facilitated by Elevate EBP.

69

NEET² young people progressed or progressing into education, employment or training through our NEET² support services.

357

secondary school students supported who were identified as at risk of becoming NEET².



£94.2M

worth of social impact generated through our work experience and practice interview programmes.³

The same offer does not always create the same opportunity.

Creating opportunities for young people is important, but making something available does not automatically mean everyone has the same chance to access or benefit from it. Different starting points, networks, needs, and circumstances can all shape the opportunities available.

This is increasingly part of the national conversation, particularly around work experience. *Education and Employers'* 'Work Experience: Past, Present and Future' report found that **78% of school staff identified family connections as a main reason why some young people benefit from work experience more than others**, alongside barriers including geography, disadvantage, travel costs, and employer capacity.

The Milburn Review raises similar concerns, highlighting how young people without strong networks are more likely to miss out, whilst *Equalex* calls for work experience to be meaningful and equitable.

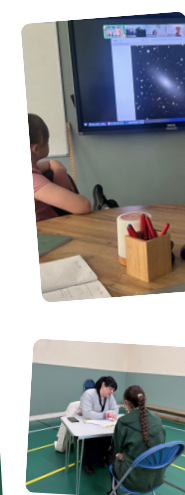
This is where facilitators such as EBPs can make a real difference. During 2025/26, **55% of the placements we facilitated were sourced by our EBP rather than by the young person or their family**. Feedback from the young people we supported shows that work experience has a positive impact on knowledge of careers and the world of work regardless of how the placement is found. However, that impact is tipped slightly towards those who were supported in securing a placement compared to those who found their own:

95% of those supported in finding a placement said they were now **more aware of different job roles** compared to **90%** of those with self-sourced placements.

84% of those supported in finding a placement said they now had **more knowledge of the world of work** compared to **82%** of those with self-sourced placements.

The differences are small, but given the advantage gap are worth noting. We make a bigger impact where it's needed most. This is social mobility in action.

55% of work experience placements facilitated by Elevate EBP this year were sourced by our team through our employer network rather than self-sourced by the young person or their family network.



Creating access is only the first step...

Making an opportunity available is only part of the picture. Young people also need the confidence and preparation to make the most of it, and for some, that means additional or different support along the way.

This is reflected in the *Gatsby Benchmarks*, which place great emphasis on meaningful and repeated employer encounters, whilst recognising the need for careers programmes to respond to individual needs.

Our Practice Interview programme shows just how effective that additional support can be for those that need it. For **SEND** students who took part in a Practice Interview:

100% of SEND students felt more positive about future recruitment opportunities following a practice interview

100% of SEND students felt more confident about the job application process following a practice interview

The *Enrichment Benchmarks* follow the same principle as the *Gatsby Benchmarks*, calling for opportunities to be equitable and inclusive, particularly for young people at greater risk of missing out. Taking a look at our Children's University (CU) engagement data, you can see why this is important. Young people with additional needs or barriers want to and are engaging with enrichment when they're able to access it:

78% Pupil Premium¹ engagement rate in CU

79% SEND pupil engagement rate in CU

81.5% ESOL² pupil engagement rate in CU

88% care experienced pupil engagement rate in CU

¹ A Pupil Premium student is a young person who meets certain government criteria that indicates they may face additional barriers to education and opportunity, often linked to socioeconomic disadvantage. ² ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

EDUCATION BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

Opportunity doesn't happen by accident.

Creating an experience is one thing. Making sure it's the right opportunity, for the right young person, at the right time takes a little more thought and nurture.

Our role as an Education Business Partnership is to bring education and business together around the needs of young people. We work closely with educators and employers to create experiences with a clear purpose and benefit, whilst considering all of the preparation, individual needs of the young person, capacity of the employer, wellbeing, safeguarding and health and safety. As a result of this work:

99%

of young people had a positive overall Practice Interview experience.

95%

of young people enjoyed their Practice Interview experience.

96%

of young people who were supporting in finding their work experience placements felt supported by their employer.



Adapting to the needs of individual young people is making a difference:

95% of SEND students felt supported by their employer whilst on work experience.

95% of SEND students enjoyed their Practice Interview experience.



LOCAL BUSINESSES ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Liverpool City Region businesses see the bigger picture and it shows!

Over the 2025/26 academic year, we were proud to work with so many amazing Liverpool City Region employers who offered their time to generously share their expertise and open up their workplaces to introduce the next generation to industries and careers they might not have been aware of or considered before.

96%

of young people who took part in Meet the Professionals were more aware of the industries and companies across the Liverpool City Region as a result of the multiple employer encounters.

"One interaction that has stayed with me was during a 'Meet the Professionals' event at a local school in Liverpool. After I had spoken about the routes to becoming a solicitor, one pupil asked me 'What if my parents don't have a lot of money?' The question really resonated with me, as I grew up in a low-income household myself. I was able to explain that while the journey can be challenging, there are now more opportunities and support networks available than ever before, and that a person's background does not have to define their future."

– Yasmin Perry, Trainee Solicitor at Maxwell Hodge Solicitors

Maxwell
Hodge
SOLICITORS

"It's rewarding to share real-life insight into our industry and help break down barriers or misconceptions about careers in construction and engineering. It also gives our team a great sense of purpose, knowing they are helping to shape future career pathways. One interaction that really stood out was speaking to a student who had never considered our industry as an option. By the end of the session, they were asking detailed questions about apprenticeships and how to get started. Seeing that shift in confidence and aspiration, even in a short conversation, really highlights the value of these events. For anyone considering getting involved, I would strongly encourage it. The time commitment is small, but the impact is huge. It's a fantastic way to give back, support your community, and also invest in your future workforce."

– Jordan Duggan, Group Director at EFT Systems Limited

EFT
Group

"Working with Elevate is hugely important to us here at Matalan. Devoting time to building a young person's confidence and sense of direction is one of the most valuable investments we can make for them, for our industry, and for ourselves. Many young people don't realise how broad fashion and retail careers really are. Career events let us open that door and show what a career here at Matalan can genuinely look like."

– Ste Molyneux, Emerging Talent Lead at Matalan

MATALAN

Careers education doesn't start with choosing a career, it starts with curiosity.

At primary school age, our careers focus should be nurturing curiosity and imagination to help children begin to understand just how many opportunities exist beyond the classroom. *The Milburn Review* highlights compelling evidence for primary careers education, noting that research shows that children begin forming ideas about their future from the time they start primary school. Yet most primary schools still have no formal careers strategy.

The primary schools our EBP works with, however, are absolutely delivering on careers, and even more so, enrichment. Through Children's University, Virtual Masterclasses and our employer-linked Imagine My Future activities, children are building a wider bank of experiences earlier on in life and making connections between what they enjoy today and where it could take them tomorrow.

31,870

encounters between employers and primary school children through events and Virtual Masterclasses

97%

of primary school children recognised that they'd developed their skills during the Imagine My Future Programme



92%

of primary school children expressed that they'd imagined a new future goal during the Imagine My Future programme



A young person can only aspire to what they know exists.

Education and Employers' 'Work Experience: Past, Present and Future' report found that young people who experience the highest level of employer engagement before the age of 16 have 80% lower odds of becoming NEET, compared to those who had the least experience. This growing emphasis on early and repeated exposure is reflected in the *Equalex Framework* and *The Gatsby Benchmarks*. Employer encounters are an important part of a young person's academic journey and the impact that they have on motivation and expectations is significant:

93%

of young people who had five or more employer encounters at our events better understand the skills required to pursue different careers.



97%

of young people who had five or more employer encounters at our events are more aware of career opportunities locally.



99%

of young people who completed a Practice Interview with us are more aware of what an employer looks for in the application process.



96%

of young people who completed a Practice Interview with us felt more positive about recruitment opportunities.



ENRICHMENT FOR ALL

Opportunity that extends beyond the curriculum.

The experiences young people have outside of the traditional curriculum play an important part in their development. This year, enrichment has moved much higher up the national education agenda. The Department for Education's new *Enrichment Framework and Benchmarks* place greater emphasis on high-quality, accessible enrichment delivery as part of a young person's education, with a particular focus on making sure opportunities reach those who otherwise might miss out.

Elevate EBP, alongside Children's University Trust, is proud to be part of the **Enrichment for All Coalition**, a national network working to champion high-quality and equitable enrichment for young people.



Enrichment at scale with Children's University

For us, this agenda feels very familiar. Through our delivery of Children's University, thousands of children are encouraged to explore enrichment opportunities every year. The Liverpool City Region is fortunate to have strong enrichment coverage in primary schools through Elevate EBP's and Commando Joe's Children's University delivery.

Families recognising the impact:

95% of parents or carers surveyed say Children's University helped build their child's confidence

94% of parents or carers surveyed say Children's University supported their child's mental health and wellbeing.

18,066

children enrolled in Children's University across Sefton, Liverpool, Wirral, Lancashire and Warrington.

OVER 430,000

hours of extracurricular learning and enrichment recorded by students.

81%

 pupil engagement rate across delivery areas.

Virtual Masterclasses

Our Children's University Masterclasses allow whole classes to dial in virtually and meet professionals from a huge range of backgrounds. Over the last academic year, we had **over 27,000** learner attendances to our Masterclasses.



Skills that could save a life

As a delivery partner for **kNOwknifeCrime**, we've helped **1,802 young people** in primary and secondary schools learn vital first aid skills.

98%

 said they'd learnt new First Aid skills and felt more confident using them

Difficult topics head-on

Working with a selection of boys from Litherland High School, we partnered with **Talk the Talk Education** to create space to challenge misogynistic attitudes and encourage more positive conversations around relationships and behaviour.



Learning through storytelling

As an education partner, alongside **Liverpool Learning Partnership**, we supported **The Animates** to use their storytelling to connect children with the different industries thriving across the Liverpool City Region.

1,320

 primary school children attended the Animates Masterclass

WORK EXPERIENCE THAT WORKS

Everyone remembers their first taste of real employment.

Young people can learn a lot about an industry through employer encounters in school and visits to workplaces, but actual work experience adds something different. For a short time a young person becomes part of a **real** working environment. They have to get themselves there, meet new people, follow instructions, manage their time, and adapt to expectations that are different from school. Along the way, they build independence and transferable skills, but they also get something just as valuable: a realistic sense of what day-to-day working life actually feels like. There is no experience, other than actual employment, that can recreate that. In 2025/26, **2,861 young people completed a weeks worth of work experience** facilitated by our EBP. National research increasingly reflects how valuable that exposure is. *The Milburn Review* has found that **lack of work experience was the most commonly cited barrier to work** amongst young people, whilst *The 2025 Youth Voice Census* found that **74% of young people believe work experience helps them understand work**.

8 OUT OF EVERY 10

of our young people felt more motivated to succeed in education following work experience facilitated by us.

7 OUT OF EVERY 10

of our young people had a better idea of their future career path following work experience facilitated by us.

Making work experience meaningful

Our “people first” approach has proven successful in facilitating meaningful work experience that **works**. We liaise with the employer and the school before, during and after a placement to make sure expectations are clear, the experience is appropriate, the placement is safe, and the young person feels supported. Health and safety is a crucial part of that process, as is keeping everyone informed. As an EBP, we also act as the bridge between the two very different worlds that are education and business, making the process easier for both. As a result of this, **88%** of the young people we facilitated work experience for said they felt supported by their employer, and that figure sits even higher for SEND students (**95%**) and those supported in finding placements (**96%**).

WORK EXPERIENCE SUCCESS STORY

When an experience stays with both the employer and the young person...

One young person found her placement so beneficial that she chose to return to **Service Electrical Distributors Ltd.** during the summer holidays to gain even more experience! Despite this industry not ultimately being her goal career destination, she was placed with this employer by Elevate EBP as she was unable to source her own placement. This illustrates how work experience doesn't need to be sector-specific to be impactful and meaningful, and that more of a focus on transferable skills is beneficial.



Celebrating the social value of work experience:

EFT GROUP

We're proud to share some fantastic recognition received from Elevate EBP for our ongoing commitment to supporting young people through work experience opportunities.

Over the past 12 months, teams across EFT Group have welcomed students into our workplaces, giving them valuable insight into the world of work, helping to build confidence, develop skills, and inspire future career choices.

We're delighted to learn that the placements we've provided this year have generated an estimated £61,498 of social and economic value just through our partnership with Elevate. This figure reflects the positive difference that work experience can make, not only for young people but for our wider communities as well.

A huge thank you to all our colleagues who have dedicated their time, knowledge, and support to make these placements such a success. Your commitment helps create meaningful opportunities and contributes to the development of the next generation of talent.

We look forward to continuing this important partnership and creating even more opportunities in the year ahead.

Council Leader welcomes success of Elevate EBP work experience programme

05 August 2026 | 3 min read

Sefton Council Leader Cllr Marion Atkinson has praised the success of Elevate Education Business Partnership's (EBP) work experience programme, which has helped thousands of young people gain experience in the workplace over the past school year.

Skills and confidence

New figures from Elevate EBP show that 2,824 students took part in work experience placements this year. They were supported by 1,043 businesses, which gave young people the chance to learn new skills, build confidence and find out more about the world of work.

Sefton Council has worked closely with Elevate EBP to support work experience opportunities for local young people and strengthen links between schools and employers. Elevate EBP has also found that the work experience placements provided by Sefton Council created almost £400,000 of social value this year.

Fantastic results

Cllr Atkinson said: "These are fantastic results and I would like to congratulate everyone at Elevate EBP on their achievements over the last year.

"The large number of students taking part, and the many businesses supporting them, shows what can be achieved when organisations work together to help young people succeed.

"Work experience helps young people grow in confidence, learn new skills and understand more about the jobs and careers that may be available to them in the future.

"It is also great to see the positive impact this programme is having. Every placement gives a young person the chance to learn something new and get ready for working life."

Elevate EBP's programme gives students the chance to take part in real workplace activities. These experiences help them improve skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving.

WORKPLACE EXPOSURE

Other ways to experience a workplace

Equalex calls for workplace experiences to be meaningful, multiple, and equitable. Alongside work experience placements, our Experience of the Workplace activities gave young people a valuable opportunity to step inside different organisations, meet employees and discover the breadth of careers within.

95% were surprised at the number of different job roles available.



REDUCING NEET

Becoming NEET doesn't start when a young person disengages.

By the time a young person appears in NEET statistics, their journey towards disengagement may have been building for years. *The Milburn Review* makes this point clearly, highlighting attendance, attainment, SEND, health, family circumstances and disengagement as factors that can appear long before a young person leaves education.

That is why the opportunities detailed throughout this report matter. **Enrichment, early careers education, repeated employer encounters, workplace exposure and meaningful work experience** can all help young people build confidence and broaden their understanding of what is possible and what could come next.

The evidence behind this is powerful. We know the *Education and Employers' 'Work Experience: Past, Present and Future' report* found that **young people with the highest levels of employer engagement before the age of 16 had 80% lower odds of becoming NEET** than those with the least engagement.

This underlines why prevention matters, because becoming NEET can have consequences that last far beyond the period itself. Recent research from the *UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies* describes this as a “**scarring effect**”, with earlier periods outside education, employment or training associated with poorer employment, financial and wellbeing outcomes later in life.

For some young people, universal opportunities will be enough. But others need more targeted support before, during and beyond the transition out of school. That is where our services begin. Through our work with Knowsley, Wirral, Halton and St Helens Councils, we provide individual support that starts with the young person: understanding what has happened, what might be getting in the way and what a realistic next step could look like.

227

NEET young people were supported or continue to be supported by Elevate EBP's NEET services.

69

young people who were NEET have progressed or are progressing into education, employment or training as a result of Elevate EBP's support.

“Sadie has helped my son so much with his confidence, she has shown him how to do his CV the correct way and how to update it, and also helped him find out his interests and what to do next as he had been out of education for six months and had lost himself and his confidence. He's also struggled with social skills which she has helped him with a lot.

He applied for many jobs and football academies, he has now been accepted for a job and he feels comfortable there. Without Sadie's support this wouldn't have been possible!”

– A parent talking about our Connect & Thrive NEET programme with Halton Borough Council

Supporting young people before they become NEET



Through our delivery of the Next Steps Programme, with Liverpool City Region Careers Hub and The Careers & Enterprise Company, and our Elevate Programme, we've supported young people identified as being at risk of NEET or disengagement while they are still in secondary school.



Alongside supporting their wellbeing as they worked towards their GCSEs and BTECs, we also helped them understand their interests, rebuild confidence and begin to think realistically about what comes next through employer encounters, group sessions and one-to-one mentoring. Crucially, that relationship is ongoing and will be maintained beyond Year 11, as they move into further education or training, to help make sure they don't become lost at one of the biggest transition points in their lives.



357 young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET supported

YOUTH GUARANTEE
Funded by UK Government



METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Youth Guarantee Trailblazer

Our work in Knowsley and Wirral also contributes to the Liverpool City Region Youth Guarantee Trailblazer (YGT), which we're delivering in partnership with Merseyside Youth Association. The YGT is part of a national programme designed to test new ways of supporting young people facing significant barriers to education and employment.

148 young people supported through the Knowsley and Wirral Trailblazer programmes

A FINAL WORD FROM OUR CEO

Thank you for another year of impact and opportunity!

As we conclude our first annual **Impact and Opportunity Report**, I think it's important to reflect on the incredible journey Elevate EBP and our network of educators and businesses have taken together over the last year. Our commitment to creating access to promise and opportunity across the Liverpool City Region has never wavered, regardless of the diverse backgrounds, social capital, and demographics of the individuals we support. Our mission remains clear: **Transforming Lives and Creating Growth**.

I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our partners and the employers who have supported us in this important work. Your collaboration and dedication have been instrumental in creating a region where aspirations can flourish, particularly in our most disadvantaged areas. Together, we are aligning to numerous national agendas and research, and to our Prime Minister's push on the national conversation around work experience, vocational education, and ensuring parity of esteem for varied pathways. We are advocating for **all** young people and championing the importance of raising aspirations and building an equitable system that benefits all. Playing our part in such a vibrant and opportunity-rich Liverpool City Region, alongside so many committed, experienced partners and organisations who genuinely care about making a difference, has been a real privilege, not just over the last year, but the past 28 years.

Our efforts have resonated deeply with the social value priorities of local businesses. By delivering national agendas locally, we have a unique understanding of the very fabric that makes up our region: residents, businesses, partners, schools, colleges and families. We recognise the collective responsibility we share in nurturing young people and providing them with the opportunities they deserve.

As we engage with initiatives like the Equalex framework and modern work experience, we reinforce our role in creating real, meaningful change. We are proud to facilitate pathways and experiences that not only prepare young people for the workforce but also enrich our communities.

Over the past 28 years, we have continued to grow as an organisation, seeing multiple changes to policy, the national landscape, public debate, delivery models, government priorities and agenda, and adapting to all. Integrity remains our guiding principle, and it is this that creates trust and collaboration amongst our EBP and our stakeholders.

I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together this year. I want to acknowledge my remarkable team, whose extensive experience and knowledge continue

to drive our success. Each individual contributes to a brighter future for the young people of our region, and it is through our united efforts that we continue to create lasting impact and equitable opportunities.

Let us carry this momentum forward as we strive to unlock the potential of every individual and cultivate a thriving, inclusive Liverpool City Region. Thank you all for your dedication and partnership. Together, we really are making a positive difference.



G. Ditchburn

Gill Ditchburn

Chief Executive Officer at Elevate Education Business Partnership

ELEVATE EBP FUNDERS, PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:



The Sovini Group*; **Merseyrail***; **Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust***; **Balfour Beatty***; **Association of Education Business Professionals**; **Children's University Trust**; **knowknifecrime**; **Talk the Talk Education**; **Merseyside Police**; **The Animates**; **Liverpool Learning Partnership**; **Sefton Council**; **Knowsley Council**; **Wirral Council**; **St Helens Borough Council**; **Right to Succeed**; **Cradle to Career**; **Halton Borough Council**; **Halton 16+ Education to Employment**; **Safer Halton Partnership**; **Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner**; **National Careers Week**; **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority**; **Liverpool City Region Careers Hub**; **The Careers & Enterprise Company**; **Department for Education**; **Department for Culture Media and Sport**; **J.P. Morgan**; **VOLA**; **Merseyside Youth Association**; **Youth Guarantee Trailblazer**; **Fair Education Alliance**; **Enrichment for All Coalition**; **Warrington Wolves Charitable Foundation**; **Edge Hill University**; **University of Liverpool**; **University of Liverpool John Moores University**; **University of Lancashire**; **University of Chester**.

***Elevate EBP Corporate Partners**

TRANSFORMING LIVES CREATING GROWTH



The Education Business Partnership

**The Education Business Partnership
for the Liverpool City Region**

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