

Work Experience at The Switch

The Switch has been providing Work Experience placements for the students in Tower Hamlets for over 30 years to provide real-life experiences of the world of work and to broaden career aspirations.

This is part of The Switch's overall mission to inspire and improve employability for young people in the borough. We help young people see the wealth of opportunities beyond school and Work Experience plays a vital role in helping to tackle the poverty of aspiration in our area.

Our Work Experience programme supports students in finding placements in their preferred industry and prepares them for their placement. We provide guidance to companies on hosting a Work Experience student, as well as ongoing support throughout the placement.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we had to pause our Work Experience programme until 2022, which significantly impacted the skills development of young people in Tower Hamlets. We decided to relaunch the programme in the 22/23 academic year and the main challenges included engaging companies to build their talent pipelines and give back to the local community, as well as delivering a quality programme. As this year was a pilot year, we decided to work with a selection of 6 partner schools in the area. We offered placements across a wide range of 11 sectors, from retail to health and social care to business and finance. This ensured every student could find a meaningful and worthwhile placement in their desired industry.



Project Reach



6

Schools



817

Students



115

Employers



11

Industries



152

Self-placements

Student Feedback

As a result of Work Experience students told us...



On average...

Students rated Work Experience 4 out of 5.



"Working at Spotlight allowed me to meet new people and learn about others' lives at home. I really enjoyed my time at Spotlight and I hope to come back in the near future."

Year 10 Mulberry Stepney Green Student placed at Spotlight, 2022-23



Employer Feedback

As a result of Work Experience employers told us...



"It was a pleasure to work with the students as they were keen to learn and follow instructions. Overall, all the boys worked well and completed their tasks. The team enjoyed working with them and found them to be responsive when points were shared."

Spotlight, Work Experience Host, 2022-23



84%

of employers enjoyed hosting a student for Work Experience.



Khadijah's Story

Work Experience

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"I had a wonderful experience."
– Khadijah

In June 2023, The Switch worked with St Paul's Way Trust School to deliver Work Experience for their Year 10 students. 195 students worked in organisations across the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and City to learn more about the world of work and develop key employability skills. Khadijah was placed at AML where she worked as an Advertising and Media Assistant.

Khadijah worked with many colleagues across the Creative Account Management and Strategy team. The aims of her placement included understanding the services and processes of an advertising agency. Khadijah shared with us how she found the work placement, and what she learned during her time at AML:

"During my work experience, I enjoyed learning new things and exploring the world of work. On the first day there I learnt about my role and each day focused on different things. I really liked this because it gave the job more excitement. While I was working for AML group, I had several meetings with workers to discuss what part of the project I would do on that day."

"Mostly I worked on the computer, doing research, planning and sharing my work with the team through Zoom calls. I learnt more about what a Media and Advertising Assistant is. Even though I searched it up on the internet before the placement, I had a better understanding of it when told by the professionals. I also learnt about how not every advertising company sells products that you can touch.

AML [make] advertises for companies like Cancer Research, TFL, Barclays and many more. I was really keen to go into and experience the world of work here.

I think work experience is important because it teaches us young adults what we might experience soon. It helps prepare us for our future and can also be used on our CVs."

2023–2024 will see the continuation of The Switch's Work Experience programme, so more students like Khadijah can have an invaluable insight into the world of work.

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Safira's Story

Work Experience

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"I loved taking part in everything."

– Safira

Safira took part in our Work Experience Programme in June 2023. She was interested in learning more about charity and public sector roles, and was matched to Barts Charity, a not-for-profit organisation that aims to improve patients' lives in the area.

The aim of Safira's role was to gain an understanding of the charity and each department within it. This included working in departments such as Finance & Funding, and Impact. This provided Safira with an excellent understanding of the charity sector and the different roles available across the industry.

Safira shared with us how she found her work placement, and what she learned during her time at Barts Charity:

"I was given the role of marketing and fundraising for medical purposes at Barts Charity. They have given me many different tasks every day such as sorting out files, writing a thank you letter, labelling fundraising buckets, and creating a social media post. I loved taking part in everything. The members there were amazing and were willing to help whenever I asked a question."

"I have learnt how they perform marketing and fundraising for their charity. There were lots more roles than I expected. I have learned all the different roles designed for each person.

I loved all the people in my workplace. The Switch gave great options on workplaces, and I got something based on the preference I gave. The place wasn't too far as well, and I loved the area. My friend and I got the same placements, and we went out during lunch. Everything was easy to find.

I think that work experience is important because everyone needs a viewpoint from early on in life to see how it is. Sometimes the placement you receive is not always what you imagined but still giving it a go may make you change your mind and learn about a new sector. The members there treated me as they did their colleagues, so it really gives you an idea of adulthood."

Learning about a sector she is interested in has helped Safira to think about her future career and the options available to her.

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Iftekhar's Story

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Iftekhar took part in Work Experience in June 2023. He was very interested in the construction & engineering sector and wanted to learn more to help him plan for his future career. Iftekhar was matched to one of our partner organisations, Canary Wharf Group (CWG).

CWG hosted 5 of our students in 2023, giving them an invaluable insight into their workplace. CWG are the developer of the largest urban regeneration project in Europe, providing an exciting environment for our students to learn more about this sector! Iftekhar worked in the Community Affairs department, learning more about the different roles within real estate and construction.

Iftekhar shared how he found his work placement, and what he learned during his time at CWG:

"One thing I enjoyed the most about my work placement was networking with different types of people. This helped me broaden my understanding of the business and financial world. It also gave me an insight into what people do on a day-to-day basis. Another thing I enjoyed about my work experience was the tours of Canary Wharf Group's

residential homes. I loved the skyscraper view and the atmosphere of the business and financial world.

One of the tasks that I had to complete was completing a list of CWG suppliers which gave me experience around excel. Another task that I completed was shadowing my line manager's meetings. Within the meeting, I was able to make many contributions to the discussions and was given valuable feedback. I developed teamworking skills that I could adapt in my working career. I was also able to develop my IT skills by completing administrative tasks.

Work experience is really important to a young person because it delivers essential skills which they can use in their working life. It can also help in their educational life. One thing I liked experiencing was people from the company talking on the phone to the customers. This is because I could witness how it feels to be on the other side of the line."

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Bentall Green Oak's Story

Work Experience

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"A huge thanks to The Switch for organising the 16 students from St Paul's Way for work experience at Holland House over the past week, and for arranging the excellent site visits. [...] they enjoyed their work experience and a large part of that is down to you and your team." - Sharon

In 2022-2023 The Switch partnered with Bentall Green Oak and The Learning Crowd to deliver Work Experience based in the construction and engineering sectors.

This was an extremely popular sector amongst the students we work with, so these placements were designed to give students a real insight into working in this environment. Bentall Green Oak and The Learning Crowd hosted 34 students over 2 placement weeks, working with two local schools.

The students were invited to Holland House, where they embarked on an ambitious construction project to redesign the space according to new client needs. Student activities were led by Dr Sharon Wright, a Senior Associate at the Learning Crowd. Tasks included group meetings, thinking creatively to redesign the space, and presenting their findings. The Switch also

organised for students to attend site visits at some of our partner organisations, such as Mace. Below, Sharon shares some feedback about the Work Experience cohort she hosted in June:

"I absolutely loved working with the students this week and they were a joy to have at Holland House. They were polite and considered in the work they produced. We asked a lot of them - putting them in project teams, giving them a complex brief, asking them to absorb a lot of information in a new environment, and expecting them to work independently for a good part of the week.

They exceeded our expectations and when they gave their final presentations to Alexander Morris, Director at BGO, I could have burst with pride not just at the fabulous content they produced but in the way they prepared and supported each other and that every one of them contributed.

All of the students are a credit to themselves and their school and they gave us some fantastic insights for our project. I have no doubt that they will go on to do great things and my only piece of advice would be - have confidence in yourself, you're amazing!"

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Bentall Green Oak's Story

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The students gained a lot from working at Bentall Green Oak, and particularly enjoyed the skills development opportunities throughout the week. Students from St Paul's Way Trust School took part in the Work Experience programme in June 2023, and have shared how they found their experience:

"I learned to be more confident in myself when speaking to others. I feel I have taken something important with me which is to be able to work as a team and help everyone."

"I really liked this week. I got social and presentation skills from work experience so thank you for having me work with you."

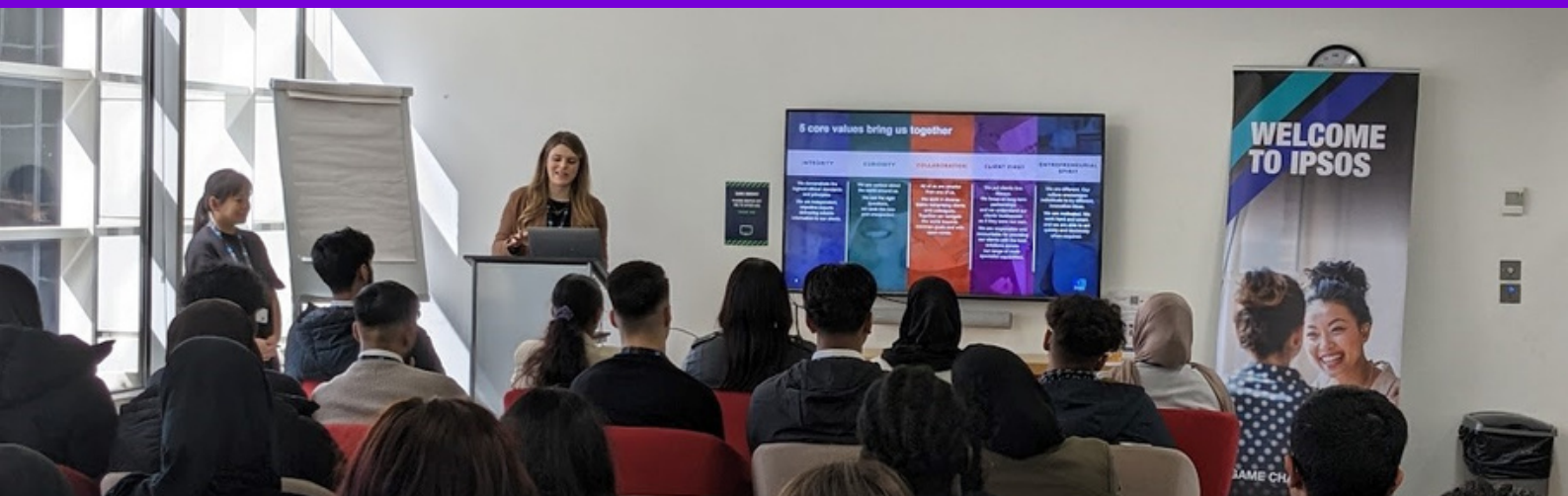
"I now know about different construction jobs. I know I want to be an architect. Learned how to work as a team. Had new experiences. Learned more independence."

"Loved this week. It really opened my eyes to the world of work. The people here were very nice and welcoming and I really enjoyed the experience."

"I really liked the visits because it showed all the effort behind a building. I also had no idea how offices work. I really enjoyed it and I hope I can come back."

Their feedback highlights the difference and inspiration that meaningful Work Experience can bring to young people. We are very excited to continue this partnership with Bentall Green Oak in the future!





"It is because of these positive behaviours displayed that makes the Work Experience programme great for not only our volunteers, but for [students'] peers. As such, it puts us in good stead to continue to extend our work experience programme next year." – Vivian

Youth unemployment remains a large barrier for young people in our borough. Our Work Experience programme aims to combat this through introducing students to the world of work, raising their aspirations, and developing key employability skills.

The initiative was relaunched in 2022-2023 after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and in July 2023, Ipsos hosted some of our students.

The Work Experience programme gives young people across the borough an invaluable insight into the world of work. It is vital for young people to begin to understand the workplace from a young age, in order to achieve their career goals and aspirations.

In 2022-2023, The Switch worked with 115 employers to deliver Work Experience to over 800 students across the borough. Ipsos hosted 6 of our students, and 2 in particular really stood out!

Vivian Lo, Head of Future Talent at Ipsos, reached out to the top performers from Work Experience at the organisation, including 2 of our students, Nickie and Kevin.

She shared this fantastic feedback with us, showcasing the incredible experiences and opportunities work placements bring to both young people and host organisations.

About Nickie, she said:

"Nickie had already stood out to me from before the week had started – her e-mail to me was professional and inviting. I really found it hard to believe that Nickie is in Year 10! In fact, Nickie's email was one of the examples we shared of how to write professionally during the work experience week.

Throughout the week, Nickie made some very valuable contributions to her cohort – it was impressive to see how she was able to facilitate a meaningful discussion with her group and express her opinions with such confidence. I also really appreciated how attentive she was during all the tasks – this did not go without notice as her volunteers gave me really great feedback about her."

And about Kevin she said:

"Kevin really stood out to me from the start of the week – his smile is contagious. He brings such positive energy and dedication to whatever he is doing – Kevin is someone that I can see that everyone would love to work with, including myself!

Throughout the week, I received lots of great feedback from the volunteers – Kevin is dutiful and conscientious and we can count on him to complete a task and complete it well. In the short time the cohort had to conduct a group presentation, it was impressive to see Kevin remember everything he had to say and to say it with confidence – he's a natural presenter!"

Both students were offered references for their excellent work, and have been invited back to Ipsos for future Work Experience. We are looking forward to continuing to work with Ipsos to offer this fantastic opportunity to more students!

Find out more about [Work Experience](#) at The Switch and get in touch if your company is interested in hosting Work Experience at work.experience@theswitch.org.

