

Nyela's Story

Work Experience

the
switch



“Work Experience pushes you towards your future career path. Even if you don’t love everything you try, you get a better idea of what you want to do. It helps you narrow down your options, so when you get to your first job, you’re more sure of what you’re looking for.” - Nyela

Research shows that the majority of employers believe young workers (aged 16-24) lack important social skills (64%) and don't know how to behave appropriately in the workplace (71%). This highlights the crucial need for hands-on experience that not only develops technical skills, but also helps students build confidence, professionalism, and communication skills.

The Switch’s Work Experience programme offers young people in Tower Hamlets the chance to gain these vital skills by immersing themselves in meaningful workplace opportunities and connecting with professionals in real work environments.

In January 2025, Nyela, a Year 10 student at St Paul’s Way Trust School, completed a one-week Work Experience placement at DeHavilland, a political monitoring and intelligence company located in the City.

At first, Nyela wasn’t sure if an office environment would be right for her. However, by the end of the week, she gained an appreciation for the small aspects of it, like having a routine and the casual conversations with colleagues, which ultimately gave her a better understanding of office culture.

“Being in an office is a nice change from the school routine. It’s good to meet new people and be on the same level as them. I like that I can just have a chat with anyone. Even if I don’t end up in a job like this, it’s nice to understand what office jobs are like”.

For Nyela, this placement was an opportunity to develop both social skills and employability skills, such as digital, organisation and problem-solving skills.

“I’ve improved my conversational skills and learned how to interact with adults in a professional setting. Before coming here, I’d never greeted someone with a handshake.

I’ve learnt things like organisation, problem-solving, even just day-to-day computer skills and being aware of DeHavilland’s computer systems, and summarising big articles.”

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Nyela has a strong passion for writing and used her placement to refine her goals. She has always been drawn to storytelling, but this experience helped her see that she prefers editorial work over scriptwriting. By stepping into a professional setting, she reinforced her passion and the placement gave her a clearer direction for the future.

"Work Experience has definitely helped solidify my future plans. I love writing, but scriptwriting feels like a big commitment, so I'd go more towards editorial work. Maybe editing books, shows, or movies; definitely something writing-based.

Even if the placement isn't exactly what you want to do, it can push you toward what you're really interested in. When I mentioned that I liked writing, I got to sit in on an editorial meeting, and I really enjoyed that. This isn't an editorial company, but finding parts of the work that I liked made me more sure about what I want to do."

For Nyela, Work Experience helped her gain confidence in her actions. She quickly realised that navigating a professional environment requires being open and proactive, even in the smallest interactions.

"Work Experience makes you more self-aware and independent. You start to realise your priorities and the impact of your actions.

On my way here on the first day, I was scared, but I'd say don't close yourself off because of that fear.

Even with small things, like when you leave, you might wonder, 'do I say bye?' You just need to do it. If you worry too much about how others perceive you, your actions can come off as rude."

Work Experience provides essential real-world exposure to workplace environments, helping young people gain the skills and confidence needed for future success.

Nyela's story shows that Work Experience fosters self-discovery, offering clearer career direction and practical insights. These experiences help students step out of their comfort zones, navigate professional environments, and develop into well-rounded individuals ready to thrive in their careers.

Find out more about The Switch's Work Experience programme:

theswitch.org/employers/host-a-work-experience-student



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