

BUSINESS RESPONSE

Below we look at what's been happening in the world of work experience and how some employers have adapted to the situation to offer new student experiences!

Have you and your students accessed My Week of Work? The venture by the Careers and Enterprise Company, Learn Live and the Oak National Academy saw leading employers line-up to support young people's careers education during lockdown. Burberry, BAE Systems and NHS Trusts were among employers to virtually 'open their doors' as part of a new initiative. Links and information about continued access to the My Week of Work lessons and recordings can be found [here](#).

And locally, Morgan Sindall, a Norwich Cornerstone Employer set up a VWEX (Virtual Work Experience Programme), delivered via Google classroom, and supported by Speakers for Schools, for a team of students to deliver a project brief to design, programme and cost a sustainable construction project. Delivered virtually, the feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. You can hear Helen Clements from Morgan Sindall talk about the experience from the business perspective [here](#)



WEX Norfolk Bulletin Summer 2020

In this issue

Our Response to Covid 19	P.1
Keeping all things WEX on track	P.1,2
Business Response and rise of VWEX	P.1
Recent Research	P.2
Looking Forward to 2021	P.3
All Important School Updates!	P.2

Our Response to Covid 19

This academic year has been challenging for everyone involved in work experience. The lockdown in March 2020 meant that our health and safety assessment activities had to be immediately halted, with the result that a significant number of Norfolk students were unfortunately unable to benefit from work experience opportunities this academic year.

Thank you for your continued understanding and cooperation at what is a difficult time for everyone involved.

For the last few months the team have been focusing on behind the scenes activities such as database development, reviewing processes and procedures, looking at new projects for virtual work experiences to complement traditional placements as well as increasing our social media presence and planning for 20/21. Read more about what we've been up to, below...

Database development

Over the summer term we brought forward several database developments; a number of these are 'behind the scenes', designed to help make our team processes more streamlined and standardised. But key for those of you managing the work experience requirements of **T level qualifications** is the introduction of the additional Attendance Portal; enabling easier and more precise recording of actual hours. These can be recorded by both school coordinators and students themselves and monitored via a new report added to the Reports section (**Attendance Check Report**). Please contact us if you need any help with this feature/reporting and we can guide you through the changes and how this will benefit you and your students.

Processes and procedures

With a quieter summer term than usual, we have used the time to refresh our IOSH qualifications and to ensure our health and safety knowledge is up to date in order to carry out pre-placement health & safety assessments. Keeping up to date with our continuous professional development ensures we continue to be indemnified by Norfolk County Council. We have also worked closely with our colleagues in Corporate Health and Safety to make sure our assessments take into account additional requirements placed on employers in response to COVID 19.

SCHOOL UPDATES

The recent situation has prompted the WEX Norfolk team to look at emergency situations, where **businesses must close** unexpectedly and without warning. Employers have been reminded that they should immediately contact the student's school to advise of their business closure, and if possible, to give an indication of when they might reopen. Schools should then let the WEX team know asap so that we can update the employer's status on the database as 'do not use'. This will really help other schools who might also have students on placement with the same employer and will also minimise any potential safeguarding concerns.

We have also produced a **COVID 19 factsheet** for students. This will be available shortly on the WEX Norfolk database.

Our **service offer for 20/21** is now available for you to purchase on Educator Solutions. Our prices for 20/21 remain the same as 19/20; there have been some updates to the **terms and conditions** so please ensure you read these thoroughly. Contact the team with any queries



work.experience@norfolk.gov.uk

During the academic year our **social media** will be focussing on specific business sectors in Norfolk and careers and opportunities in those businesses. Link to us to make sure you and your students don't miss out. (@WEXNorfolk)

In June, the **Careers and Enterprise Company** issued guidance on how to score online employer engagement experiences in Compass. More guidance will be published in Autumn 2020 – so remember to keep an eye open for this.



Social media

We have increased our activity on Twitter and Yammer and have been posting about a wider range of work-related learning topics from top tips on what employers look for and industry sector information through to highlighting virtual work experience opportunities. We have also included posts about working/learning from home tips and activities to develop soft skills which will help students in the working world. Along with ideas for fun and educational things to do in their spare time at home, from archaeology, history and art through to space exploration, science and nature, we hope that our posts have provided some inspiration! You can find us on  [WEX Norfolk Twitter](#) and  [WEX Norfolk Linked In](#)

SEND NOA virtual project

We are adapting our delivery model for this project for the coming academic year. This will see exciting new developments including employer-led, virtual workplace tours and live online question and answer sessions, hosted and facilitated by the WEX Norfolk team where students and employers will come together to discuss career paths into their business and the industry, qualifications and skills and qualities, career progression and opportunities. The addition of a live employer led 'activity' designed to engage and involve students should make this a memorable activity for everyone!

Our intention - to use the learning from this pilot to develop a series of programmed activities with employers, **Inside Business**, which schools will be able to access to help contribute towards Gatsby Benchmark 5, Encounters with Employers. More news on this, later in 2020.

Recent Research

Check out the Youth Voice Census Report 2020 for some interesting findings. The report (based on responses mainly received before the pandemic) is a temperature check of how young people aged 14-24 are feeling about a range of issues related to education, employment, looking for work and where they live. Our team will be considering the findings around work experience and developing an action plan to help address some of the issues that have been highlighted. We'd love to hear your ideas and suggestions so please do get in touch! work.experience@norfolk.gov.uk

'78% of young people agree that work experience helps them to build skills'

Youth Voice Census report 2020

Recent research conducted by the Careers and Enterprise Company concludes 'Workplace skills now more important than exam results in post-Covid jobs market say teachers'

- 74% of teachers say employability skills are now the most important way to improve pupils' career prospects, compared to 62% who say good academic grades are
- 49% fear a lack of jobs for young people and damage to their career prospects as result of the pandemic

Read more about their findings [here](#)



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021


There is continuing uncertainty about the long-term economic consequences of the lockdown for young people and for the business community. Students need to learn about the world of work more than ever and we need to collectively ensure that they can benefit from high-quality interactions and insights into different careers and workplaces. With suggestions that there will be more of an impact on those from economically less stable backgrounds then we need to offer students solutions that are both equitable and widely accessible.

If you are able to offer great flexibility around the timings for your work experience programme for 20/21, including considering alternative models and/or a selection of dates, then this may well help to assist our business community to say yes to student requests!

Here are some **work experience suggestions** you might like to consider; a 1 day taster experience day with one or more employers or across 2 or 3 departments (either individually or for small groups of students) , 2 or 3 days (rather than traditional 5), asking one employer if they will host 2 or more students across a week, different sectors, virtual/hybrid wex offer.

And don't forget - workplace visits can also provide a great insight into the world of work.

VWEX has its place but is not the panacea for all students and all employers! Although VWEX has some great benefits for students over traditional WEX opportunities, such as no travel, greater accessibility for students who may have missed out previously e.g. Looked After, Young Carers, students with limited familial networks, it can also be a barrier for those who are digitally disadvantaged. Employers set their own application criteria but often programmes are open all year round and experiences are free to join, many are in fields that would traditionally be difficult for students to access e.g. medicine and law. But it remains critically important that students can experience the face to face contact of a real environment, where they can put into practice the transferrable skills learnt in the virtual world. Students need to understand what it's like to be in a workplace, not necessarily one that's aligned to their career aspirations but to help provide opportunities for developing soft skills and the enhanced benefits which can't be found in the online world.

 With the rise in **VWEX** programmes, we have worked with colleagues in the New Anglia Enterprise Adviser Network to put together a directory of VWEX opportunities which will hopefully be of interest. We'll keep you updated on progress but aim to make this available to schools during the Autumn term 2020.

And finally

Have a comment on this issue?

Then do get in touch

work.experience@norfolk.gov.uk

We will be issuing another bulletin during the Autumn term so if you have any articles you'd like us to focus on or have good news stories that we can share across the Norfolk WEX network then just let us know!

work.experience@norfolk.gov.uk

Follow us on:



WEX Norfolk Team:

Sandra.Gotts@norfolk.gov.uk

Charlene.Catchpole2@norfolk.gov.uk

Zack.Wedral@norfolk.gov.uk