

Transition skills (mock interview and CV workshops).

What works?



The Careers & Enterprise Company is evidence led and works closely with the following strategic partners:

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- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Gatsby Charitable Foundation
- Teach First
- The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
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- WorldSkills
- Young Enterprise

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The Careers & Enterprise Company works with the following organisations to deliver transition skills (mock interview and CV workshops) in schools and colleges in England.

- Ahead Partnership Limited
- Barnsley Healthcare Federation CIC
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- Bridge to Work at Loughborough College
- Business in the Community
- Career Connect
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- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire Education Business Partnership Ltd
- DFN Charitable Foundation
- EBP South Ltd
- Education Business Partnership (NW) Ltd
- Engineering Development Trust
- Form the Future C.I.C
- Founders4Schools
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- National Literacy Trust
- NYBEP Ltd
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- Sheffield City Council
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- Thinkforward
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- Worcestershire County Council
- Worcestershire Training Provider Association CIC

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About this paper

This paper reviews the current evidence relevant to the design and effectiveness of employer-led transition skills events such as mock interviews and CV workshops. The findings provide schools and colleges with evidence to support the delivery of these events and activities.

The paper draws on a mixture of academic literature and new survey data collected by the Education and Employers research team at a number of transition skills events. The paper uses data collected from a student feedback survey, testimonies from teachers and employee volunteers as well a follow up survey of experienced practitioners which tested the insights for best practice gathered from the other sources.



In brief



The evidence base for these events suggests that they are 'potentially effective' (e.g. scoring a likely 2 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale). Whilst a number of studies exist demonstrating positive outcomes, there are no robust quantitative or large-scale studies into the outcomes experienced by young people attending these events. These largely qualitative studies provide insights into how, and why, a young person's attitudes and preparedness might improve after attending a transition skills event. While there have been several studies which have examined transition skills events, most rely on a very limited sample.

Evidence collected from wider literature, new survey data, and stakeholder testimonies highlight that transition skills events can have positive outcomes for those taking part. The events can be expected to improve the practical recruitment skills of young people and their personal effectiveness, social capital, educational engagement and career awareness.

The different evidence sources used in this review provide insights into how these events can best be designed. Using the available academic studies, as well as the new evidence provided here it is possible to give best practice advice for designing and delivering these events with respect to: preparation and context; authenticity; interaction; feedback; variation; volume; and timing (age of participants).

Executive summary

Transition skills events are designed to improve young people's understanding of how the labour market works, whilst developing job seeking skills (i.e. how to manage application processes and to perform well in interviews) and personal resilience. New data captured for this report and existing studies suggests that transition skills events, in the form of mock interviews, CV workshops and recruitment talks have potentially positive impacts, although evidence sources rely on limited sample sizes. Globally, there are very few quantitative and longitudinal studies into this area of careers provision. More large-scale evaluations are needed to draw out whether transition skills events have an observable, consistent and replicable impact on young people.

These impacts can be observed in the following areas:

1. Personal effectiveness

- Confidence
- Resilience

2. Career readiness

- Occupational awareness

3. Employability skills

- Interview and recruitment skills

4. Social capital

- Expanding personal networks
- Access to new and useful information

5. Educational engagement

- Motivating young people to study harder



The evidence collated in this review provides practitioners with a number of insights for planning and running transition skills events. It should be noted that guidance offered here is based on both a limited literature and a limited sample of students and practitioners.

1. Preparation

Schools and colleges should set aside time for students to prepare before an event begins. Students regularly found mock interview sessions more useful if they have had time to prepare questions and answers prior to the event taking place.

2. Authenticity

Transition skills events should be presented or facilitated by an employer or an employee volunteer, assisted by teaching staff and careers professionals who know the students taking part.

3. Interaction

Mock interviews should be delivered as one-to-one practice interviews rather than as a passive talk or presentation which simply describes the process.

4. Feedback

Employers should provide feedback on the performance of a young person.

5. Variation

Students taking part in mock interviews should have the opportunity to be interviewed by a number of different employee volunteers, preferably from different occupational sectors.

6. Volume

Students should have the chance to take part in multiple transition skills events. In our survey of young people, we found that it is the students who undertake the greatest numbers of mock interviews and CV workshops who found them to be most helpful to them.

7. Age of participants

Whilst the evidence suggests that positive outcomes can be achieved across all Key Stages, there is a strong indication from both the literature and survey results that best outcomes can be achieved if both CV workshops and mock interviews are offered to students in year 11 or older.

1. Introduction

Since its inception The Careers & Enterprise Company has sought to understand where the evidence exists supporting various careers activities.¹ This review assesses the evidence base on transition skills events such as mock interviews and CV workshops, and sets out how this evidence base can be used to provide useful insights for practitioners.

No generation of young Britons has entered the world of work with more years of schooling, higher levels of qualification or greater human capital to their names. Despite this, young people are struggling to compete for available employment opportunities.² On leaving education, many young people face greater competition for work from older workers delaying retirement and graduates taking jobs once the preserve of non-graduates.³

On leaving education, many young people face greater competition for work from older workers delaying retirement and graduates taking jobs once the preserve of non-graduates.³

Modern transitions from education into sustained employment are widely acknowledged to be longer and more fractured than in the past and are much more likely to require that young people show resilience when navigating an increasingly complex labour market.⁴

Young people need to understand the characteristics of the labour market, such as the roles of employment agencies, Jobcentre Plus, careers services and contractual variety, including opportunities for internships, volunteering and other pathways. They must also now go into the world of work with the skills necessary to secure employment within recruitment processes such as presenting a CV, completing an application, attending selection panels and interviewing well. A 2010 London First report analysing the attitudes of 2,000 Greater London employers found that 67% of employers deemed the quality of the written application as either important or very important when selecting for interview, 94% of respondents highlighted communication skills at interview as a very important factor when deciding whether to employ a candidate.⁵

1. The Careers & Enterprise Company. (2016). *What Works in Careers and Enterprise?* London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

2. Campbell, M. (2016). *The UK's Skills Mix: Current Trends and Future Needs*. London: Foresight, Government Office for Science.

3. Mann, A. and Huddleston, P. (2016). Schools and the twenty-first century labour market: perspectives on structural change. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 45, 208–218.

4. Tomlinson, M. (2013). *Education, Work and Identity*. London: Bloomsbury.

5. Experian. (2010). *The Voice of London Employers*. London: London First.

Mann and Huddlestone assessed insights from four focus groups of British recruiters with first-hand experience of hiring young people. They found that many recruiters reported that transition skills were often severely lacking in young people applying for roles.⁶

They really need to get better, learn better about how work works, how to get a job. They need to be taught CV writing and interview skills – it is so important. T. You have to write well, present yourself well and submit a well-structured CV. Preparation is absolutely vital – young people get muddled and just turn up. Recruiter (p.9).³

Results from a 2012 Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development survey concur with this view. In a poll of 780 Human Resource (HR) professionals, 54% agreed that young people find it difficult to talk about their skills and experience in

a way which is relevant to the workplace.⁷ Transition skills events – in the form of mock interviews, CV workshops and transition skills presentations – are focussed on developing and improving these skills. The events are designed to improve young people's understanding of how the labour market works, whilst developing job seeking skills (how to manage application processes and perform well in interviews) and personal resilience.

6. Mann, A., and Huddlestone, P. (2015). *What Do Recruiters Think About Today's Young People? Insights From Four Focus Groups*. London: Education and Employers.

7. Chartered Institute of Personal Development. (2012). *Learning to Work: Survey Report*. London: CIPD.

Current policy and practice

In March 2015, the Department for Education released its statutory guidance document on Careers Guidance and Inspiration for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff. The report contained advice on what schools can do to ensure all pupils are ready for the world of work:

Every school should engage fully with their local employer and professional community to ensure real-world connections with employers lie at the heart of the careers strategy. It could mean in practice [...] Help with basic career management skills like CV writing, CV building, job searches and job interviews (p. 8).⁸

Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework introduced in September 2015 similarly put an increased focus on the importance of careers guidance for all young people aged 13–18. Pupils must understand how their education equips them with the behaviours and attitudes necessary for success in their next stage of education, training or employment and for their adult life.⁹ For schools and colleges there is growing need to offer activities which develop resilience and an authentic recruitment experience.

The Careers & Enterprise Company is funded by government to help schools to create a stable careers programme and to build an enduring link with employers. The Company endorses the Gatsby Foundation's 'good career guidance' benchmarks.¹⁰ These benchmarks call for increased encounters with employers and employees, learning from career and labour market information to inform young people's labour market decisions, as well as addressing the needs of each student and tailoring careers programmes to reflect these needs. Government¹¹ also funds the National Careers Service – Inspiration Agenda to extend its resources to help schools make links into employment for their students, as well as Jobcentre Plus working with schools to offer 12 to 18 year old pupils insight into the world of work and advice on options like traineeships and apprenticeships¹².

As well as being promoted by government and NGOs, several studies suggest that large proportions of secondary school pupils see transition skills events as helpful. When surveyed, nearly two-thirds of a representative sample of young British adults stated that they would have welcomed greater attention to developing such transition skills whilst in school or college.^{13 14}

8. NatCen Social Research and SQW. (2017). *Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges*. Research report London: Department for Education.

9. Ofsted. (2015). *The common inspection framework: Education, skills and early years*. London: Ofsted.

10. Gatsby Charitable Foundation. (2014). *Good Career Guidance*. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

11. HM Government. (2013). *Inspiration Vision Statement*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/238841/bis-13-1176-inspiration-vision-statement-R2.pdf [accessed 16/06/2017].

12. Jobcentre Plus (2016) *Support rolled out to schools*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jobcentre-plus-support-rolled-out-to-schools> [accessed 16/06/2017].

13. YouGov. (2010). *Edge Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys*. London: Edge Foundation.

14. Tu, T., and Higton, J., (2013). *Education and Employability*. London: Ipsos MORI.

Demand

A 2017 report by Mann and colleagues sets out findings from a representative survey of 1,744 young British adults aged 19–24. The survey, undertaken by YouGov, investigated the experiences of these young people as they engage in transitions which take them from education towards the working world. The report looked at which activities are commonly undertaken by schools and colleges to help prepare them for school to work transitions and specifically explored in which areas young people would have welcomed more help from their schools/colleges. The study found that 60% of young adults would have welcomed more help in creating a good CV or good application and how to perform well at interview (these activities were the most selected out of the 14 options offered). Demand was particularly high from young women.¹⁵

Despite this demand, historic survey data shows that transition skills events are far from commonplace for many 11–16 year olds. In 2010 YouGov found that only 24% of 1,710 Key Stage 4 respondents had taken part in mock interviews and 44% in CV workshops.¹⁰ There also appears to be notable differences in the level of offering depending on geographical region. A slightly older study by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority found that students from schools in urban areas were far more likely to have taken part in CV workshops and mock interviews than in rural schools.¹⁶

However, schools and colleges across the UK appear to be taking steps to improve the level of transition skills provision available to young people. A recent study, funded by the Department for Education asked 543 year 10 and 11 students and 493 year 12 and 13 students about the career

development activities offered in their schools. It found that CV sessions were offered to 80% of year 10–11 students and to 79% of year 12–13 students, whilst mock interviews were offered to 69% of year 10–11 students and to 71% of year 12–13 students.⁸

Of all career development activities, it is transition skills where the existing literature is most limited. A number of studies exist which record the perceptions of stakeholders (teachers, employers and students) about the impact and delivery of transition skills events but they are limited by their small sample sizes and weak methodologies.

15. Mann, A. Kashfepakdel, E.T, Rehill, J. and Huddleston, P. (2017). *Contemporary Transitions: Young Britons Reflect on Life After Secondary School and College*. London: Education and Employers.

16. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. (2004). *Work-Related Learning Baseline Study 2004*. London: QCA.

Methodology

This review sets out evidence from four different sources:

- Academic literature of relevance to the delivery and impact of each of these forms of transitional skills event. A literature review identified and considered relevant works published in OECD countries from 2000 onwards. Due to the modest quality and lack of experimental and quasi-experimental studies on this subject, so-called grey literature was also considered and included (i.e. research published outside of academic circles). Whilst action undertaken by universities to improve the employment prospects of graduates is outside the remit of this review, given the limitations of the literature uncovered by the review, a number of studies which discuss best practice for these activities in a higher education setting were also reviewed.
- Results from a survey of 183 14–18 year old students reflecting on their experiences of recruitment events. The survey asked specific questions about the design of recruitment events and how the young person's skills and attitudes may have been changed as a result of their participation.
- Testimonies from teachers and employee volunteers who took part in the events observed by the project team. Teachers and employees were interviewed to provide experienced insights into the effectiveness, design or outcomes of different transition skills activities.
- Results from a survey of 56 experienced practitioners. This survey drew on practitioner expertise to test and validate insights for best practice found in the literature, student surveys and teacher and employer testimonies.

The full findings referenced throughout this review can be found in a separate report, *How to make the most of mock interviews and CV workshops Evidence review for the Careers and Enterprise Company report. What works? Transition skills (mock interviews and CV workshops). Technical report.*¹⁷

17. *How to make the most of mock interviews and CV workshops Evidence review for the Careers and Enterprise Company report. What works? Transition skills (mock interviews and CV workshops). Technical report.*

2. What are transition skills events?



Transition skills events are focussed on improving the knowledge, attributes and skills a young person needs when navigating the job market and applying for jobs. Transition skills – being able to present yourself and highlight your appropriate skills in the context of a job's requirements in what is often a stressful environment – are critical to young people's success in obtaining employment. Transition skills events are often, but not always, delivered with workplace volunteers.

Different types of school and college events

Transition skills can be practiced and taught in a number of different ways. The most common approaches are set out below.

Mock interviews

in which a teacher or other professional provides pupils with a chance to practice their interview technique in a situation mimicking a real-life job interview. This often takes the form of a one-to-one round-robin style session, where students speak to a number of different interviewers in one location.

CV workshops

in which a teacher or other professional helps pupils to understand what a good CV looks like, how to write cover letters and what employers look for in a good job application. A CV workshop can be delivered as a talk or classroom presentation with break-out group sessions, as well as a one-to-one session where students bring in their CVs for evaluation.

Opportunity awareness events

in which a teacher or other professional discusses how the labour market works and when and how to apply for jobs. Offering general advice on the current recruitment and labour market landscape, advising young people on who gets shortlisted, and who does not, when it comes to applying for jobs and why.

3. What impacts do transitional skills events have?



The existing evidence base assessing these events suggests that they are effective. There are a number of largely qualitative studies that provide useful insights into how and why a young person's attitudes and preparedness improve after attending a transition skills event. Globally, there are very few quantitative and longitudinal studies into this area of careers provision. More large-scale evaluations are needed to draw out whether transition skills events have an observable, consistent and replicable impact on young people.

It is also worth noting that most of the existing evidence of outcomes related to these events is limited to the United States with very few studies focussing on the UK. The evidence suggests that transition skills events are 'potentially effective' (e.g. scoring a likely 2 on the Early Intervention Foundation evidence scale). Whilst a number of studies exist demonstrating positive outcomes, there are no robust quantitative or large scale studies into the outcomes experienced by young people attending these events.¹⁸

Personal effectiveness

Confidence

As may be expected, students who participate in these events are commonly noted as having increased confidence as a result. Ali and colleagues found that students who interacted with employee

volunteers in a mock interview setting were more confident in speaking to employers in subsequent real-life interviews.¹⁹ Testimonies from educational professionals and employee volunteers concur.

"It gives them a chance to grow their confidence when speaking to someone of real seniority in business, which is really invaluable."

Year 12 and 13 careers coordinator
– Leicester¹⁷

Resilience

As well as increasing confidence, these events give pupils a chance to experience and deal with negative feedback and in doing so improving their resilience when entering the world of work.

"It helps young people understand and work on negative feedback which really helps them to set themselves apart from the competition. A big issue for a lot of these kids is confidence, and for most of them they get that big knock back when they first apply for a job, which can really set them back."

Year 12 and 13 careers coordinator
– Leicester¹⁷

18. Early Intervention Foundation. (2017). *EIF evidence standards*. Available from: <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/eif-evidence-standards> [accessed 13/04/2017].

19. Ali, S. R., Yang, L. Y., Button, C. J., & McCoy, T. T. (2012). 'Career Education Programming in Three Diverse High Schools: A Critical Psychology—Case Study Research Approach.' *Journal of Career Development*, 39(4), 413–428.

Employability skills

Interview and recruitment skills

It is possible to identify studies which suggest that transition skills events have a positive impact on career progression. These studies show that students routinely perform better in actual interviews after taking part in these events. In their study of mock interview methods, Damian and colleagues found that pupils who engaged in interactive mock interviews were found to perform better in an interview scenario led by experienced HR professionals compared to those who did not, drawing particular attention to non-verbal skills such as body language.²⁰ Similarly, Thomas found students were able to articulate their skills and achievements with greater clarity after taking part in mock interview sessions.²¹ When surveyed, the majority of students in our sample agreed that in taking part in mock interviews they learnt what makes for a good interview.¹⁷

Career readiness

Occupational awareness

Both CV workshops and mock interview events also offer young people the chance to receive bespoke career advice based on their career ambitions and interests.

“These events also give them a chance to get some careers advice based on their interests. Most of [the employee volunteers] have been in different jobs for a number of years so they can offer insights in getting into certain careers as well as the skills needed once they’ve got to interview stage.”

Year 11 teacher – Essex¹⁷

Data collected from our survey of students found that the majority agree that after attending a mock interview, CV workshop or transition skills talk they have a clearer sense of what they need to do in school/college to get the job they want.¹⁷

Social capital

In the events observed, students often had opportunity to speak directly with volunteers from the world of work who were well placed to provide them with new and useful information about the recruitment process. These events give young people the opportunity to expand their effective personal networks, allowing them access to larger numbers of professionals with more varied types of experience.^{22,23} They provide young people with the chance to access ‘non-redundant, trusted information’ about the availability of certain jobs and the suitability of a student for a potential job – a form of social capital.²⁴

“When you consider our geographical area, most of the kids in our catchment area come from the local villages. Without these events these young people would barely have the chance to speak to any large businesses, let alone consider them as potential career options. It changes their thinking when someone comes from Watford or from London. They start to think “hold on, I can go do that”. It opens up their minds to careers and options they haven’t thought about, just because it’s a different alien voice saying it.”

Year 7–13 careers coordinator – Hertfordshire.¹⁷

20. Damian, I., Baur, T., Lugin, B., Gebhard, P., Mehlmann, G., & André, E. (2015). Games are better than books: in-situ comparison of an interactive job interview game with conventional training. In Conati, C., Heffernan, N., Mitrovic, A. and Verdejo, M. (Eds.) *Artificial Intelligence in Education*. Augsburg, Germany: Springer.

21. Thomas, T. (2013). *“Hey, those are teenagers and they are doing stuff”*: Youth Participation in Community Development. Ph.D. dissertation. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh.

22. Raffo, C. and Reeves, M. (2000). Youth transitions and social exclusion: developments in social capital theory. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3:2, 147–166.

23. Stanley, J., and Mann, A. (2014). A theoretical framework for employer engagement. In Mann, A., Stanley, J. and Archer, L. (Eds.) *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education: Theories and Evidence*. London: Routledge, pp.36–52.

24. Granovetter, M. (1995). *Getting a Job – A Study of Contacts and Careers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Whilst this is applicable to all young people, Croll and colleagues indicate “this honest, reliable advice is of particular value to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.”²⁵

Educational engagement

The survey data collected from young people attending these events suggests that engagement in transition skills activities can be associated with more positive attitudes towards schooling. Of the participants surveyed the majority noted that both CV workshops and mock interviews motivated them to study harder when in school. Across all events

this is most pronounced amongst post-16 students. In a recent study Mann and colleagues explored the perceptions of 390 secondary school staff about the impacts of employer engagement activities they had observed. The study finds that teachers consider mock interviews to be useful for students across all attainment levels, but believe that higher achievers respond especially well.²⁶ More evaluation is needed in this area to determine whether these activities can be statistically associated with greater academic attainment, across all achievement levels.

Impacts on students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

In a rare longitudinal study on this topic Izzo and colleagues assessed what outcomes could be expected when US students with learning disabilities of differing severities took part in a careers focused programme including transitional skills activities. Within the programme, 60% of participants completed multiple mock interviews and 95% took part in employability and development sessions. They found that young people who had taken part in the programmes had significantly higher earnings five years on, and were significantly more likely to be employed or on a training programme than those who had not participated.²⁷ Staff interviewed specifically for this report also highlighted the importance and necessity of events like these for SEN students.

“These sort of events [mock interviews] are absolutely key for SEN students. Because of the age difference to some of the other college students – for example some of my students are 23 – the careers professionals are sometimes wary of giving any advice and say ‘go and ask your tutor’. For this student type there really isn’t a lot out there. That’s why events like these really add something.”

SEN Tutor – Tower Hamlets.¹⁷

25. Croll, P., Attwood, G. and Fuller, C. (2010). *Children's Lives, Children's Futures – A Study of Children Starting Secondary School*. London: Continuum.

26. Mann, A., Dawkins, J. and McKeown, R. (2016). *Towards An Employer Engagement Toolkit: British Teachers' Perspectives On The Comparative Efficacy of Work-Related Learning Activities*. London: Education and Employers.

27. Izzo, M. V., Cartledge, G., Miller, L., Growick, B. and Rutkowski, S. (2000). *Increasing employment earnings: Extended transition services that make a difference. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 23(2), 139–156.

4. What are the lessons for practice?



When designing transition skills events, there are a number of lessons for practice that can be inferred from the evidence. It should be noted that guidance offered here is based on the insights gathered from both a limited literature and a limited sample of students and practitioners.

Evidence sources for lessons for practice

	Literature	Testimonies from practitioners and employers	Student survey	Practitioner survey
Preparation & context	✓	✓	✓	✓
Authenticity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feedback		✓		✓
Variation		✓		✓
Volume		✓	✓	
Timing (age of participants)		✓	✓	✓

Preparation and context

The evidence suggests that schools and colleges should spend time preparing students before they attend these events. Employers and teachers agree that sessions can be expected to have the most impact when young people have been thinking about their futures as part of a wider careers environment and/or if they have completed preparatory activities. When surveyed, 94% of the 56 surveyed practitioners agreed (69% agreeing strongly) that mock interviews were more effective when students took part in preparatory activities before attending the session.¹⁷

“We have a number of different careers modules within citizenship that build on each other. We’ve had mock assessment centres, talks on apprenticeships plus little drips of information given about careers thinking which help these sessions as the young people already have the mind-set there.”

Year 11 teacher – Essex¹⁷

Employee volunteers and teaching staff noted that students have greater confidence if they have practiced interview questions and responses beforehand. This is especially observed for students with SEN.¹⁷

“Preparation is key with events like these. All of the kids on this course have learning difficulties, so if you throw something at them they haven’t seen or heard of before they may just freeze and not know what is expected of them. So the students have been set employability tasks during their normal lessons anyway. They’ve been working in pairs during form time, preparing questions and answering them in pairs. They’ve also had a member of staff (usually me) come in and give them the mock interview.”

Year 12 and 13 SEN Tutor – London¹⁷

Insights from higher education: Preparation

Studies assessing mock interviews for university students also offer useful insights for best practice. In Hansen and colleagues’ study students took part in a ‘frequently asked question’ activity as well as a ‘peer interviewing’ activity in which students were randomly paired with a partner and asked to interview each other outside the classroom prior to taking part in the interview with the volunteer. They observed students had increased confidence as they approached the mock interviews after they had taken part in such preparatory exercises.²⁸

28. Hansen, K., Oliphant, G. C., Oliphant, B.J., and Hansen, R. S. (2009). Best practices in preparing students for mock interviews. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 72 (3), 318–327.

There seems to be advantages for students attending these events when students are also taught more generally about how recruitment processes work. There was considerable agreement by practitioners that this statement is accurate, with 80% agreeing (27% agreeing strongly) that wider transition skills advice was an essential part of any successful mock interview session.¹⁷

Our student survey data indicates that transition skills events have more impact when they are undertaken by students who already have a good idea of their career ambitions. While this is evident in students participating in mock interviews, it is particularly pronounced for those attending CV workshops.¹⁷

Authenticity

Transition skills events should be presented or facilitated by an employer or employee volunteer from the world of work, assisted by teaching staff who know the students taking part. The evidence indicates that the adults participating in the event are critical to its usefulness. Students surveyed at transition skills events report that it was very important to them that the person they heard from was from the world of work. This is a common refrain repeated by teachers interviewed across all the events that were observed. When asked, 95% of practitioners agreed that mock interviews are more effective when the interviewer is clearly someone from the world of work, whilst 61% agreed better outcomes could be achieved when the presenter of a CV workshop was an employer/employee.¹⁷

“They see us teachers as people who never leave the school, not even to sleep! Even though most of us have tonnes of external experience and are more than willing to share it. Having that different voice really adds something extra, it keeps the young people engaged. They seem to value it more from someone from the real working world.”

Year 11 teacher – Essex¹⁷

In his study, Brewer found that students reported that they most appreciated the real-world examples given during the presentations by employers, saying the examples made the information seem real and applicable to their lives.²⁹

However, this does not mean that school staff should be excluded from transition skills sessions. School staff know the students, the curriculum and the experiences they have had during their recent school career. Being in this position allows educational professionals to assist the employee volunteer and encourage young people to immerse themselves in the activity by linking experiences in their schooling that they can use in an interview or on their CV.

“The key though is having the teacher present throughout the whole session. Being in my position you know the curriculum so can make links to things you know they can grasp and appreciate. More than that though I know the students, so I can pitch in and make links.”

Year 11 teacher – Essex¹⁷

This also helps support the professional development of teachers and careers advisers in updating their knowledge and awareness of the realities of the world of work.

Interaction

In terms of format, the evidence recommends that mock interviews should be delivered as one-to-one practice interviews rather than as a passive talk or presentation which simply describes the process. Damian and colleagues found students' interview performance is greatly improved after using an interactive mock interview e-learning system compared to a conventional written job interview guide.²⁰

This is reflected in the results of our student survey. Young people who had taken part in a one-to-one mock interview session rather than a classroom presentation were more likely to say they found the activity helpful than those who had taken part in a transition skills presentation.¹⁷ They were also 18% more likely to say they had a clearer sense of what they needed to do in school to get the job they wanted after taking part in a one-to-one session. When this assertion was put to the panel of fifty-six practitioners 100% agreed that interactive one-to-one sessions provided better outcomes for the young people taking part.¹⁷

There was broad agreement across practitioners that mock interviews were more

effective when the student participating is given feedback to improve their future performance, with all survey respondents agreeing (87% strongly agreeing) that this was a vital part of any such experience.¹⁷

Variation

Students taking part in mock interviews should have the opportunity to be interviewed by a number of different employee volunteers, preferably from different occupational sectors. When thinking about mock interviews, teachers highlighted that better outcomes can be expected if the young person taking part has the opportunity to be interviewed by a number of different employee volunteers.¹⁷

"It's better from my experience having a smaller group and having more employers. With all people of this age, but especially SEN students it takes a little while for the confidence to grow. For example, each student had 4 interviews and you could visibly tell by the last one they were feeling much more confident and really getting the most from the volunteers."

Year 12 and 13 SEN tutor – London¹⁷

This is a view endorsed by our practitioner survey.¹⁷

Insights from higher education: Feedback

Marks and colleagues assessed the 'round-robin' interview process which involved giving real-time feedback to interviewees from both peers and employees from the local business community. Participating students indicated they had a good perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their interview performance and were able to identify areas where they needed to improve.³⁰

Volume

In our survey of young people, we found that it was students who undertake the greatest numbers of mock interviews and CV workshops who found them to be most helpful to them. Results from our student survey demonstrate that young people who had previously taken part in at least one mock interview prior to a new event reported greater positive impacts than peers who were undertaking the experience for the first time. On average, students were 11% more likely to say they had a clearer sense of what they needed to do in school or college in order to get the job they wanted if they had previously attended a mock interview.¹⁷ Further evaluation is needed to validate this insight within the views of a larger cohort of practitioners.

Age of participants

The timing of events like these is important. Whilst the evidence suggests that positive outcomes can be achieved across all Key Stages, there is a suggestion from both the literature and survey results that best outcomes can be achieved if both CV workshops and mock interviews are offered to students in year 11 or older. A number of teachers noted that prior to this young people have very little experience to talk or write about which may impact on usefulness.¹⁷

"In terms of ideal timing after year 10 is the best time for events like these as the young people have done their work experience. Any time before that it's a bit pointless as there's no applicability there for them they have very few experiences to draw on."

Year 7 – 13 careers coordinator – Hertfordshire¹⁷

This is reflected in our student survey. On average, results demonstrate that better outcomes can be expected from mock interviews and CV workshops if they are carried out at late KS4 and post-16.¹⁷ The majority of practitioners agreed that these events have a greater impact on Year 11 or older, rather than younger pupils.¹⁷

5. Developing the evidence base



There is a clear need to improve the quantity and quality of research into actions that schools and colleges can take to help young people through their school to work transitions, equipping them with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in recruitment exercises. No UK study has explored whether (and how) participation in school-mediated activities does improve the likelihood of young adults gaining employment. The evidence reviewed here suggests that schools can have some confidence that transition skills events are helpful to students and that impacts will be greatest where young people undertake activities relatively close to their entry into the labour market, that activities are contextualised within broader careers provision and that students have an opportunity to interact with a number of different mock interviewers with direct workplace experiences of real-world recruitment.

Key areas for improving the evidence base include:

- conducting more long-term evaluations that assess the measurable impacts of transition skills events. For example, assessing long-term education attainment, success in university applications or success in apprenticeship applications;
- conducting more UK based studies;
- evaluating pupils taking part in different event formats as a way of assessing the relative effectiveness of different event types, for example, the range of sectors represented or the number of volunteers involved;
- assessing the impacts of these events on different types of pupils, for example, by attainment levels, socio-economic background, geographical location etc.
- creating more robust evaluation and research designs. This may include increasing sample sizes, the use of randomised control groups and longitudinal analysis to offer more concrete conclusions on impacts and efficacy.

There is a clear need to improve the quantity and quality of research into actions that schools and colleges can take to help young people through their school to work transitions, equipping them with knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in recruitment exercises.

6. Conclusions

The wider literature, as well as evidence from student survey and practitioner survey carried out for this review, suggests that participation in transition skills events with employers can also have positive impacts on the decision making, employability skills and educational outcomes for the young people taking part. This review of the evidence has found:

Need and Demand

As modern school-to-work transitions become increasingly competitive the need for students to be equipped with adequate transition skills has become ever more important. Despite this, recruiters and employers have consistently reported the current generation of students as lacking knowledge of recruitment processes, as well as basic interview and application skills. Several large scale studies have demonstrated that students appear to be aware of the necessity of these skills and would welcome greater provision from their educational institutions. For schools, a key message taken from the literature is: increase the provision of transition skills activities to align with labour market and pupil demand.

Evidence base

There are a number qualitative studies which offer useful insights into the effectiveness of transition skills events. They provide insights into how and why a young person's attitudes and preparedness might be expected to improve after attending

a transition skills event. However, the number of high quality studies and evaluations into transition skills events remain very modest. The evidence supporting these events is largely qualitative with relatively small sample sizes. More experimental or quasi-experimental studies are needed to offer more definite conclusions about the design and outcomes for events like these. However, from the evidence that does exist it is possible to draw tentative conclusions about the impacts and offer advice to practitioners looking to set-up transition skills activities.

Impacts

There is some evidence that suggests that transition skills activities can often have positive outcomes for the students taking part. Alongside expected outcomes such as the improving knowledge of what makes a good CV or interview, the evidence presented here highlights that wider impacts can also be expected. It suggests that students who participate in these events are noted as having increased confidence as a result of

them. Moreover, these events give pupils a chance to experience and deal with negative feedback, in doing so improving their resilience when entering the world of work. Both CV workshops and mock interview events also offer young people the chance to receive bespoke career advice based on their career ambitions and interests. Further evidence suggests that engagement in transition skills activities can be associated with more positive attitudes towards schooling. Moreover, these opportunities serve to expand the effective personal networks of young people, allowing them access to larger numbers of professionals with more varied types of experience.

Insights for practice

The different evidence sources used in this review provide insights into how these events can best be designed. Taking account of the limited academic studies as well as the new evidence provided here it is possible to give best practice advice for designing and delivering these events with respect to: preparation & context; authenticity; interaction; feedback; variation; volume; and timing (age of participants).

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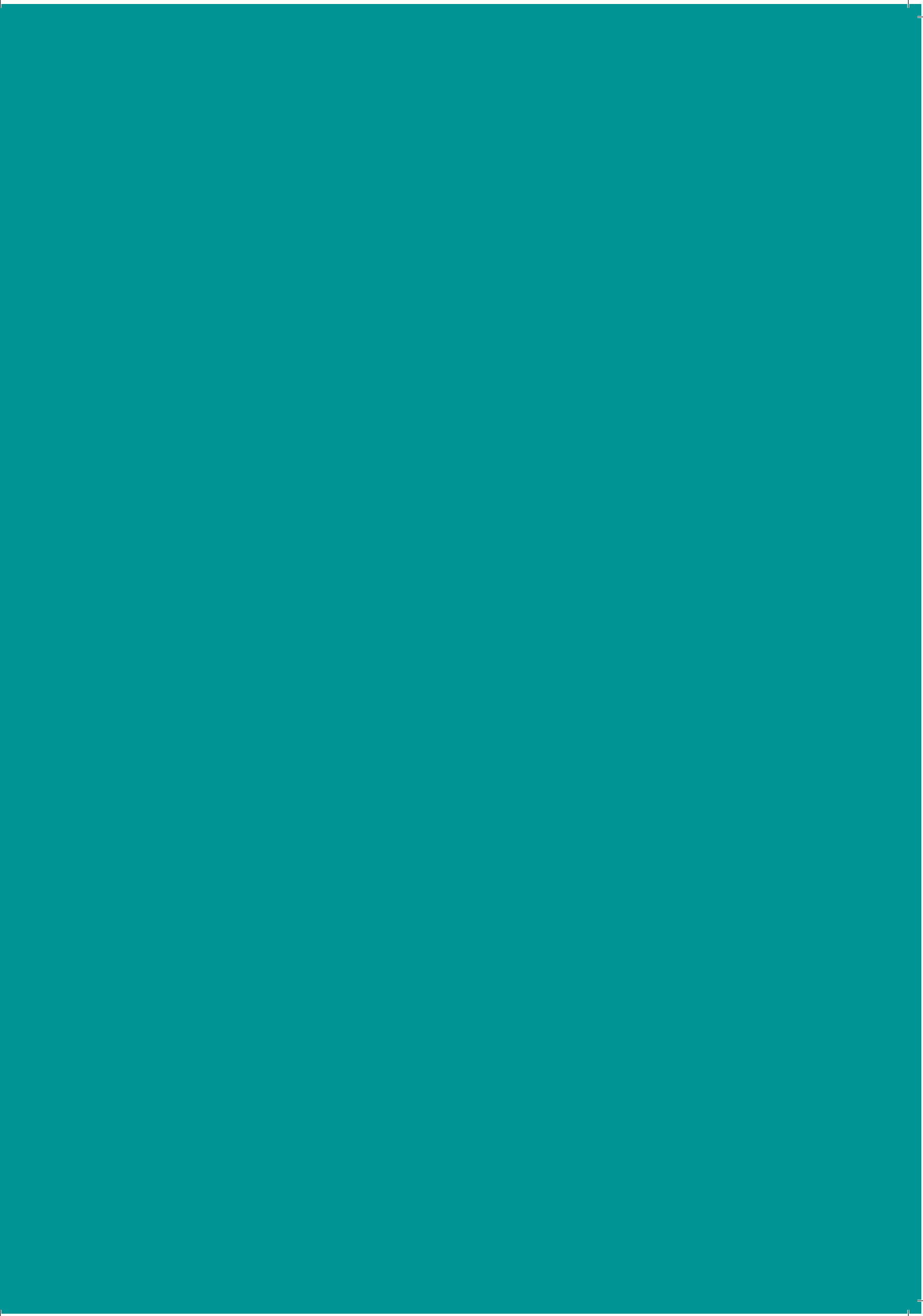
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