



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

RESEARCH, DOCUMENT

# Review of teacher-employer encounters/placements (summary)

The aim of this research was to understand current practice, understand whether it would be beneficial to teachers and employers, and if so, what models of delivery should be offered and make recommendations for a future pilot.

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# Introduction

The Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting LLP to undertake a review of teacher-employer encounters and placements at secondary schools in Wales.

The aim of this research was to:

- understand current practice of teacher-employer encounters/placements across Wales
- understand whether teacher-employer encounters/placements would be beneficial to teachers and employers across Wales, and if so, what models of delivery should be offered
- develop guidance to support meaningful teacher-employer encounters/placements and make recommendations for a future pilot

The review of teacher-employer encounters was conducted by York Consulting between April and June 2023. The review methodology comprised a literature and evidence review, a school survey and interviews with key stakeholders, school staff and employers.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the review included Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs), Regional Education Consortia, Careers Wales, and others such as the Careers and Enterprise Company and relevant academics. The school survey received 28 responses. Of these respondents, 10 took part in an online follow-up interview. In addition, interviews were completed with individuals at 12 employers.

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# Findings

## Literature and evidence review

Much of the existing evidence on current practice and models of delivery for teacher-employer encounters is based on activities that took place, or are taking place, in England or the USA. The delivery models identified in this review suggest that teacher-employer encounters can take various forms, ranging from brief interactions to more in-depth engagement activities spanning several days. However, in most cases, the delivery model appears to involve project-based placements of teachers in industry, with employers and teachers co-creating lessons plans or curriculum activities.

Despite a need for the evidence base on teacher-employer encounters/ placements to be developed further – particularly from a Welsh perspective – there are indications that interactions between employers and teachers bring an array of benefits for teachers, pupils and employers. Key success factors identified in the literature include adequate resourcing, such as dedicated brokerage to support longer term relationships between schools and employers.

## Current practice

The view from stakeholders, school staff and employers are that teacher-employer encounters are not common practice in secondary schools in Wales. Where teacher-employer encounters are happening, they tend to be ad hoc and the result of varied, individual arrangements, with no consistent model for delivery or brokerage between schools and employers. There was a consensus amongst stakeholders that, for teacher-employer encounters to become common practice, additional resourcing and coordination would be required.

## Views on benefits and potential outcomes

A key finding from the research is that there is interest and enthusiasm for teacher-employer encounters amongst stakeholders, schools, and employers. A common view was that teachers tend to lack industry experience, with most having gone straight from university into teacher training and working in schools. It was felt that teacher-employer encounters could help to address this gap in experience, by providing teachers with up-to-date knowledge of sectors relevant to their Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). Stakeholders and school staff also highlighted how teacher-employer encounters could support teachers to meet the aims of the new Curriculum for Wales, particularly regarding authentic learning experiences.

Employers typically viewed the benefits of teacher-employer encounters as a way to increase and diversify their talent pipeline by showcasing the opportunities they offer, to shape the school curriculum, and/or as a way to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities.

## Barriers and enablers

The most common anticipated barrier to delivering teacher-employer encounters cited by school staff was having insufficient time to engage. Linked to these comments made by school staff about a lack of time, the most common anticipated barrier mentioned by employers was difficulties developing and sustaining relationships with schools. The cost and availability of cover staff was also a key barrier cited by school staff.

When asked about key enablers that would support them to deliver teacher-employer encounters, suggestions from school staff and employers were typically linked to the common barriers cited. For school staff, funding for supply cover and time were suggested as key enablers. Linked to the challenges

mentioned above around employers developing and sustaining relationships with schools, the most common enabler suggested by employers was a third party to support them in brokering relationships with schools.

## Summary of findings and recommendations for a future pilot

Feedback from stakeholders, schools and employers did not indicate a clear view on any one preferred delivery model for teacher-employer encounters. Given the time and resourcing barriers highlighted, a range of options should be offered to give schools and employers maximum flexibility to choose the delivery model that best suits their context and capacity. Possible delivery models include online employer events, employer talks at schools, teacher workplace visits and teacher 'externships' (placements).

This review has highlighted various issues that cut across suggested delivery models and should be considered when developing pilot teacher-employer encounters in Wales.

These include:

- recognising teacher-employer encounters as part of teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and providing guidance on how headteachers can fund this activity as part of teachers' CPD
- building curriculum development time into encounters
- combining teacher-employer encounters with pupil encounters with employers
- aiming to develop sustainable, long-term relationships between teachers and employers
- the need for third-party brokerage between schools and employers to deliver teacher-employer encounters

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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