Modern Workplace Experience:

'Let's make it work for young people within Liverpool City Region'

Thursday July 3 June 2025

Peter Gaul
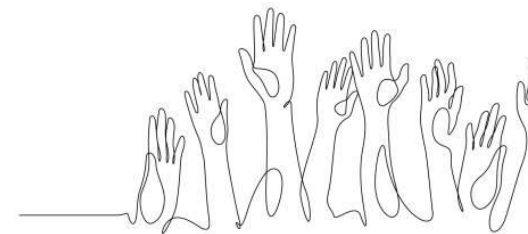
Challenges with the old model!

If we wanted to get to somewhere better, we wouldn't necessarily start from here...but...

Challenges of traditional WEX models

1. Young people don't get enough experiences – what they do get is **inequitable** and varies in quality

2. Traditional models of work experience often do not reflect modern work practices or offer opportunities for **skill development**

3. Young people traditionally undertake work experience after making options choices; this may be **too late**

4. Schools recognise the potential drawbacks of running blocked work experience but are faced with many **barriers**

5. Planned intent, **learning outcomes** and evidenced application of knowledge, skills and behaviours is rare

6. Employer capacity to engage with work experience is limited – there are **not enough opportunities** in the system

Aims of equalex

- **Reinventing work experience**

- **Responding to policy ambition**

- **Reaching all learners**

As the national body for careers education, we aim to:

- drive new/emergent practice
- change the dynamics from inputs to learning outcomes
- provide clarity on quality
- add rigour to building skills
- address social mobility and gaps in access
- speak to a wider education agenda about a rich and rounded experience
- Be responsive to employers
- Support education and employers

What resonates most with you in LCR?

A programme of modern wex should...

- Prioritise young people who are missing out and provide targeted support

- Include experiences that are employer-led in their design

- Enable meaningful relationships between the employer and young person

- Start early, allowing access to multiple, different industries and occupations

- Be underpinned by learning outcomes, to ensure a progressive high-quality approach

- Offer meaningful experiences as defined in updated Gatsby Benchmark 6

What resonates most with you in?
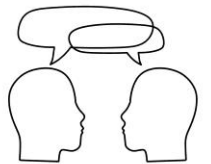
Ensuring the quality of meaningful, multiple, and progressive workplace experiences
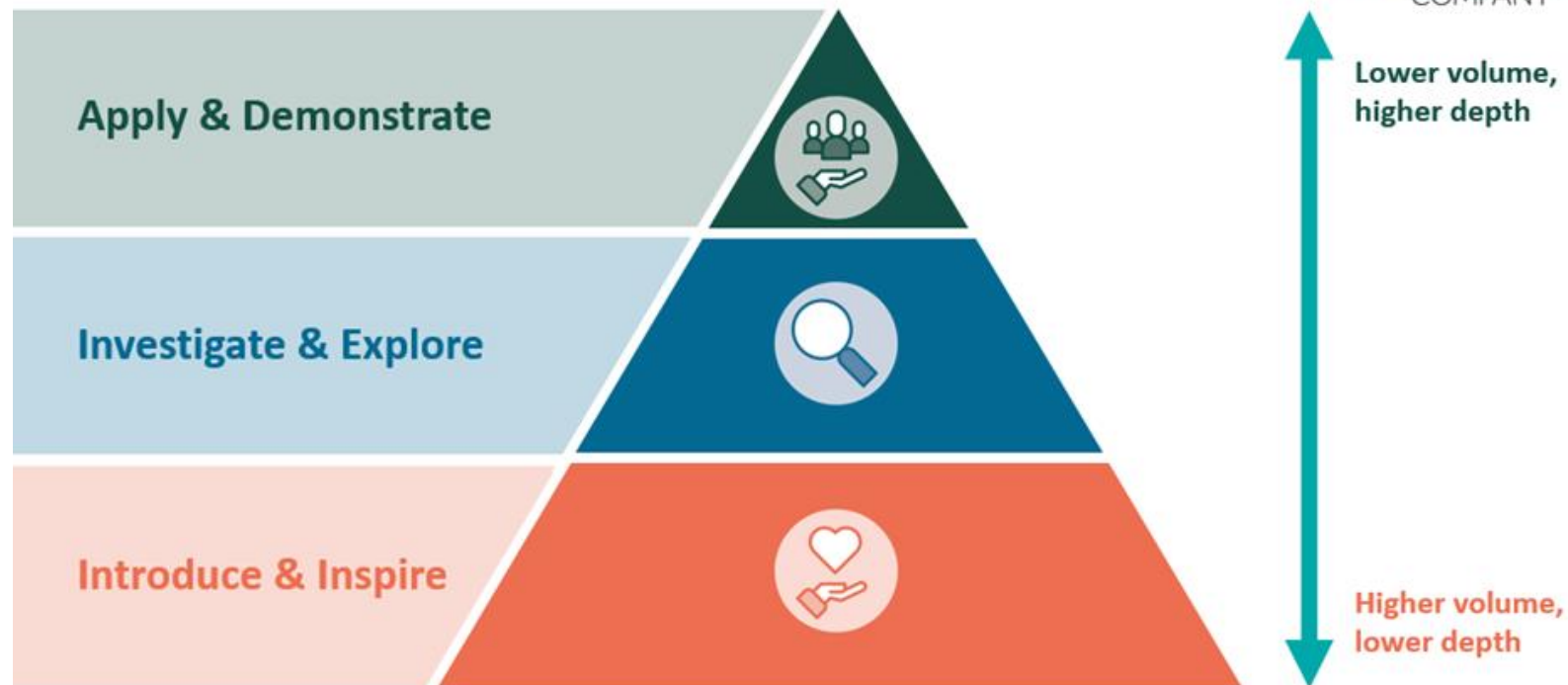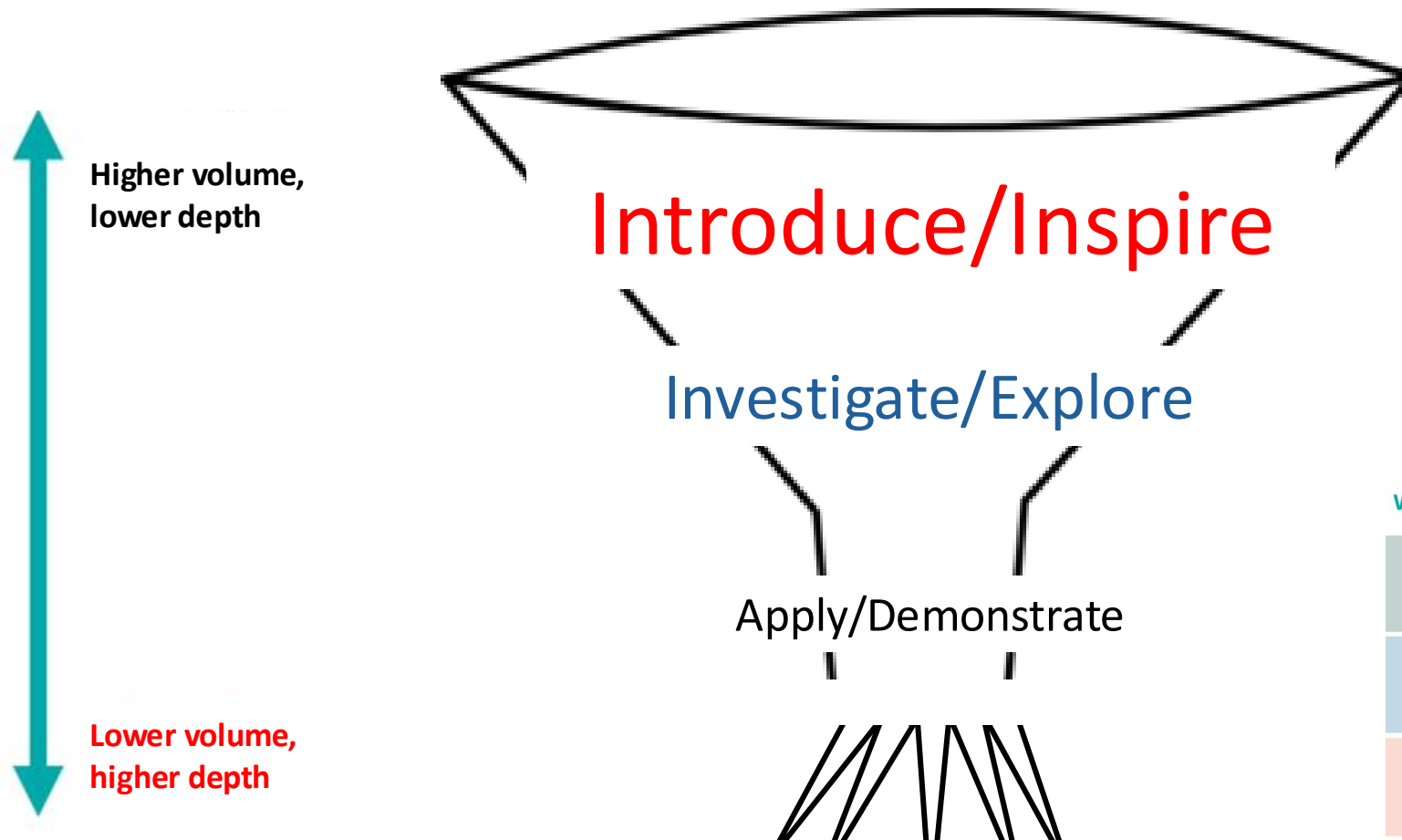

Workplace experiences as a progressive programme

- Apply & Demonstrate
- Investigate & Explore
- Introduce & Inspire

Lower volume, higher depth

Higher volume, lower depth
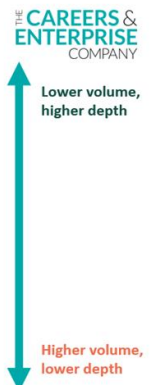
The LCR equalex pilot: first steps

equalex early findings

- Local partnerships

- Life-changing work

- Stories…

- Inspirational 'events'

- Heroic

Values-driven?

Consistent?

Strategic?

Key equalex challenges

Defining *meaning of meaningful for* education & employers

Scaling up: **volume** of activity **&** depth

Progression delivered via outcomes and objectives

Establishing **sustainable** partnerships, locally and across LCR *(the conditions for collaboration)*

Defining a new **language** / lingua franca

From inputs to measurable, progressive outcomes via the equalex framework

"I'm playing the right notes, but not necessarily in the right order."

(Eric Morecambe)

Key equalex challenges:
original order

1. Defining *meaning of meaningful for* education & employers

2. **Progression** delivered via outcomes and objectives

3. Establishing **sustainable** partnerships, locally and across LCR *(the conditions for collaboration)*

4. Scaling up: **volume** of activity **&** depth

5. *Defining a new* **language** / lingua franca

Scaling up: **volume** of activity **&** depth

requires

Establishing **sustainable** partnerships, locally and across LCR
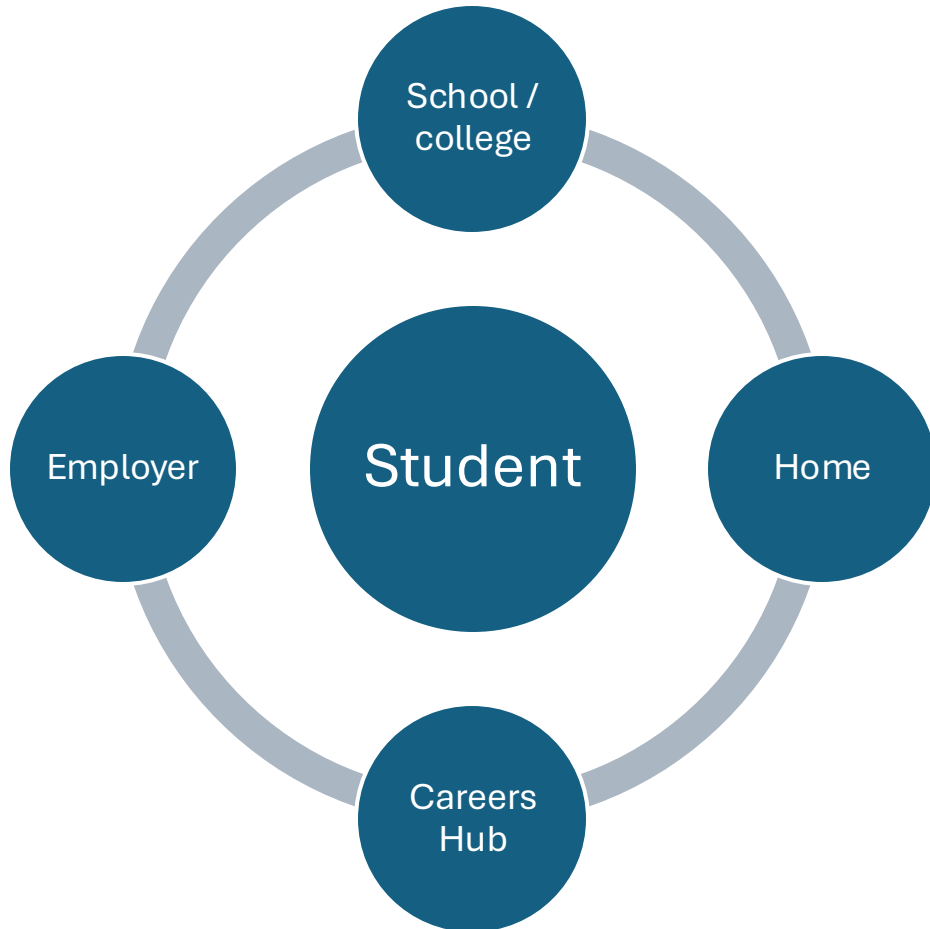*(the conditions for collaboration)*

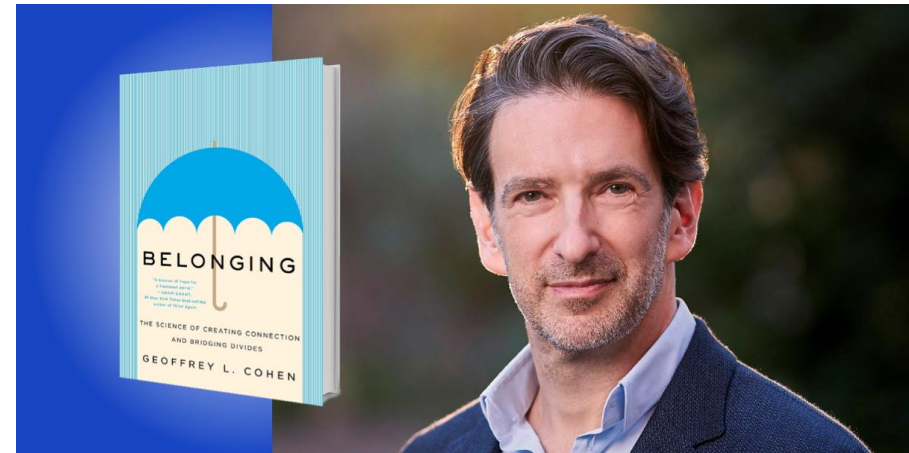# The importance & challenge of the 'onboarding' process

'Situation crafting' &
'wise interventions'

"…a sense of belonging isn't just a by-product of success but a condition for it – in school, work, homes, health care settings, negotiations, politics, community policing, and virtually every domain in which humans deal with other humans…"

(Geoffey L. Cohen)

Modern work experience?

"So when crafting situations to nurture belonging, we need to pay attention not just to the physical features of the situation but to the way the situation is being perceived, felt and experienced. We often have trouble appreciating how differently a situation is being experienced by others, even by people we feel close to.

...even a secure base can be pulled out from under us, as psychologists have found...Belonging is less like a keystone belief and more like a perception being re-created anew in every situation."

(Cohen)

"So when crafting situations to nurture belonging, we need to pay attention not just to the physical features of the situation but to the way the situation is being perceived, felt and experienced. We often have trouble appreciating how differently a situation is being experienced by others, even by people we feel close to.

...even a secure base can be pulled out from under us, as psychologists have found...Belonging is less like a keystone belief and more like a perception being re-created anew in every situation."

(Cohen)

The LCR equalex pilot: key areas of focus to date
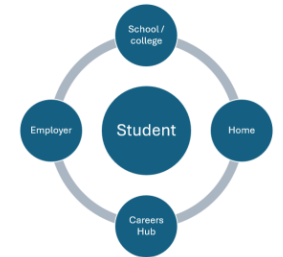
Conditions for collaboration

Conditions for collaboration

1. **What do schools need / want to make equalex work?**

2. **What do employers need / want to make equalex work?**

3. **What does The Careers Hub need / want to make equalex work?**

What does the onboarding process need to look like for

The first meeting key ingredients:

- What
- Who
- Where
- Why
- When

- **How?**

What are the optimal conditions for collaboration between schools, employers, providers and Careers Hub?

School / college

1. What do schools need / want to make equalex work?

school / Hub / employer / provider

employer

2. What do employers need / want to make equalex work?
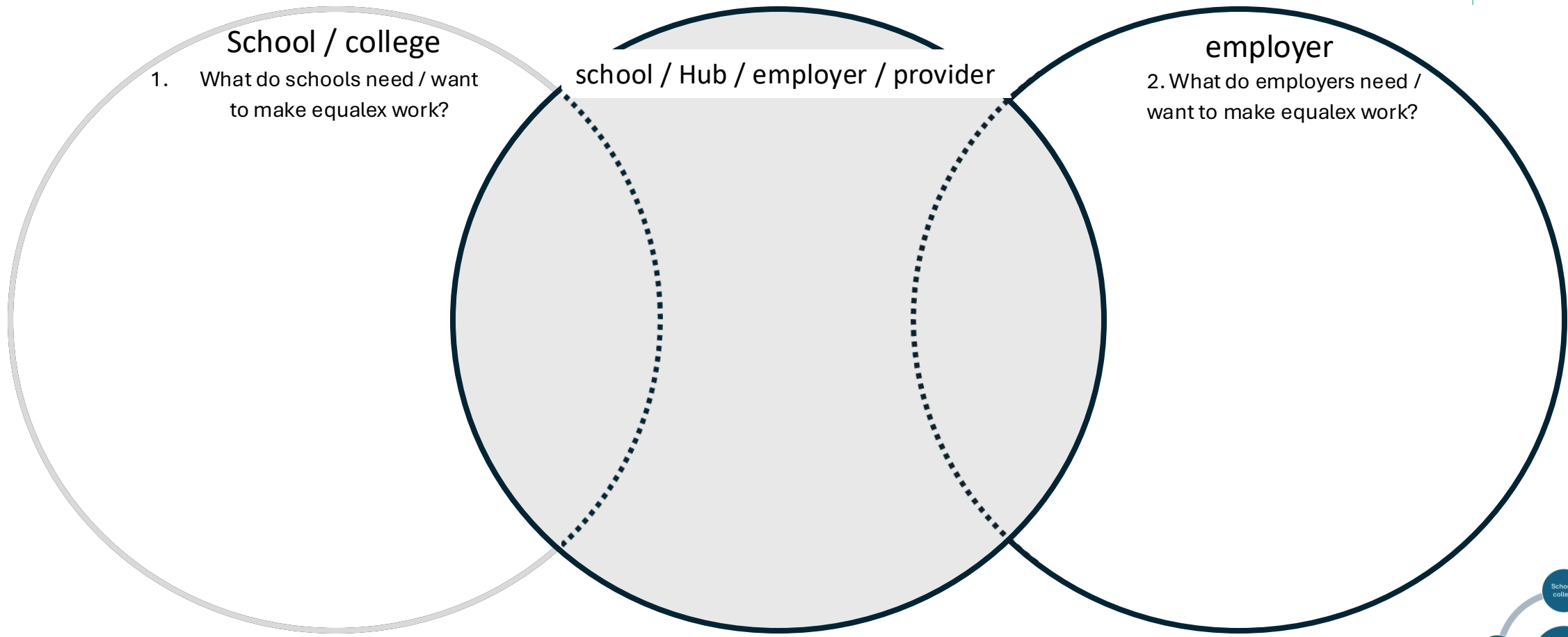
Other?
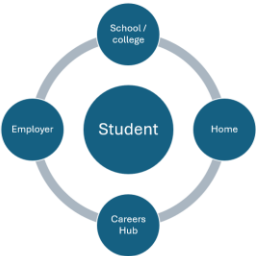
Next steps….

Defining *meaning of meaningful for* education & employers

Progression delivered via outcomes and objectives
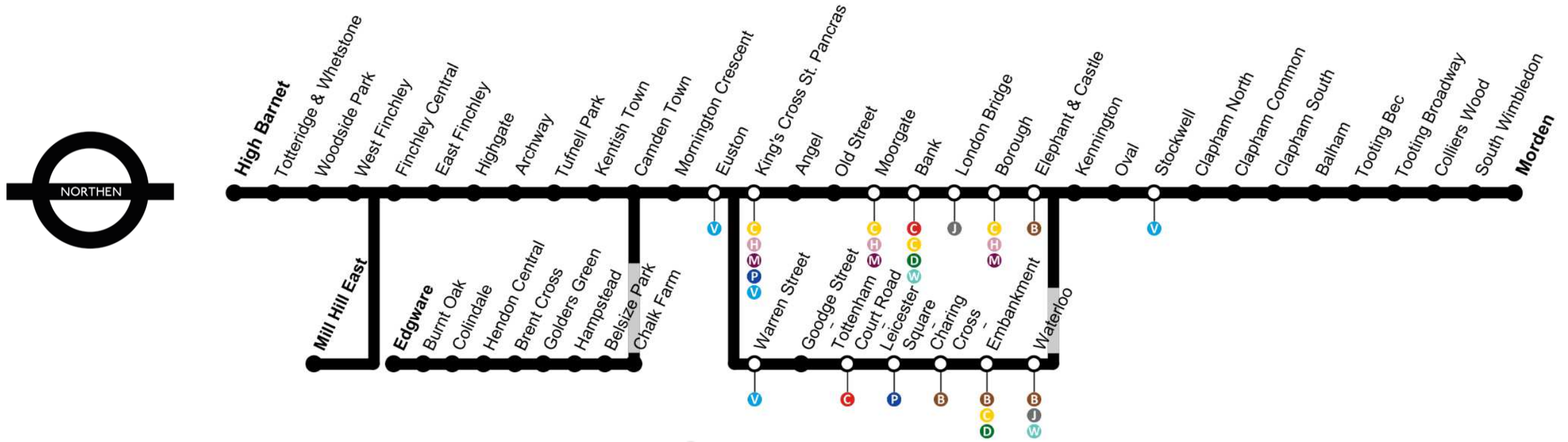
Planning a meaningful 'activity / activities' for sustained partnership:
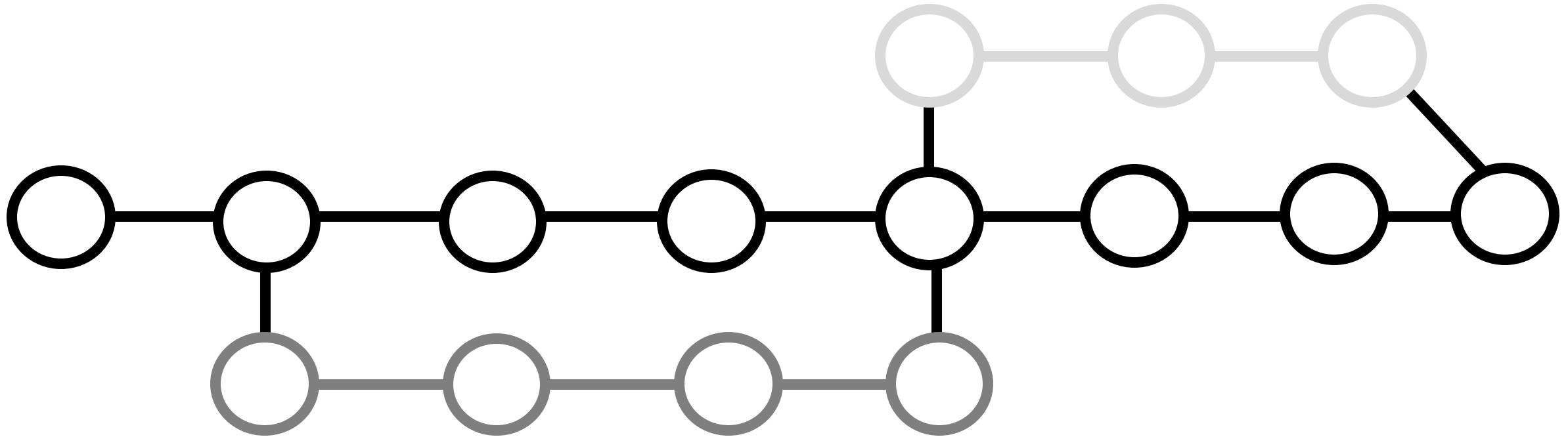
What does *meaningful* mean ?

What might be needed for greater meaning? (RESOURCES)	
Who might be included to create greater meaning (BROADENING THE COALITION)	
Where might greater meaning take place? (LOCATIONS)	
When might greater meaning occur? (TIMING)	
How will we document the process for clarity? (PLANNING PROCESSES)	
How will we capture the quality of the overall process and outcomes? (EVALUATION)	
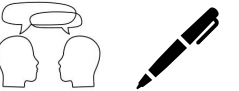
Good career guidance the next 10 years

A meaningful experience will:

• have a clear purpose, which is shared with the employer and the young person

• be underpinned by learning outcomes that are appropriate to the needs of the young person

• involve extensive two-way interactions between the young person and employees

• include opportunities for young people to meet a range of different people from the workplace

• include opportunities for young people to perform a task set by the employer or to produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace

• include the employer providing feedback to the young person about their work

• be followed by opportunities for the young person to reflect on the insights, knowledge or skills gained through their experience

'Readying the system'

How do we make this happen for 'all' students, particularly the students who need it most?

How do we 'scale up' to create the capacity in the system?

What does 'civic' / look like in 2025 in terms of partnerships between institutions & individuals?

Peter Gaul

Belonging School Ltd

Contact:

peter@belongingschools.org

joanne@belongingschools.org

Core Theme: Introduce & Inspire

Learning Outcome	Learning Objectives
Increased Opportunity Awareness Learners have a broad knowledge of a range of career opportunities which enables informed decision making.	Learners understand that there are different types of workplaces such as, offices, warehouses and home working, and that there are different types of employment such as, self-employment, freelancing, and full-time employment.
	Learners can recall a range of different sectors and jobs, and describe the characteristics of the workplaces these jobs might take place in.
	Learners can identify links between the curriculum and essential skills needed within the workplace and can give examples of careers linked to subject areas.
Improved Self-Awareness Learners are aware of their passions, skills and work preferences and understand how these could inform their career choices.	Learners are aware of essential workplace skills and are able to self-assess their current skill level, aligned to the Skills Builder Universal Framework.
	Learners can identify their passions, interests and skills and consider how they might inform potential jobs or career pathways.
	Learners can describe their work style and ideal working environment and can give examples of workplaces that would and would not suit their preferences.
Inspiration Learners are inspired and motivated by careers opportunities which they may not have otherwise considered.	Learners can recognise and challenge stereotypes about career pathways and understand that their career aspirations should not be limited by them.
	Learners can identify career role models and articulate their early career aspirations.

Core Theme: Investigate & Explore

Learning Outcome	Learning Objectives
Career Readiness Learners have developed essential skills which will support them to transition to the workplace.	Learners can evidence the essential workplace skills they have developed, aligned to the Skills Builder Universal Framework.
	Learners can demonstrate essential skills applicable to different workplaces, including skills required when working in a remote environment.
	Learners can create, develop or design something based upon a brief set by an employer, and identify the essential skills they used.
Exploration of roles and responsibilities Learners have a deeper level of knowledge and understanding about the role responsibilities, and pathways of careers in areas of interest.	Learners understand the different routes into employment and understand the differences between pathways.
	Using real life examples, learners can describe the roles of different people within an organisation and talk about what they do.
	Learners can create, develop or design something based upon a brief set by an employer, and relate the essential skills they used to a potential career pathway.
Understanding of growth sectors and the changing economy Learners understand how the local and national labour market is changing and what this might mean for their career choices.	Learners can identify growth sectors within their local area and talk about the types of jobs within these sectors.

Core Theme: Apply and Demonstrate

Learning Outcome	Learning Objectives
Applying Knowledge and Skills in the workplace Learners can evidence when they have applied their knowledge and skills within the workplace, can articulate this to potential employers, and can use their experiences to make informed career decisions.	Learners can evidence when they have applied careers knowledge, essential skills and behaviour within a workplace environment, and have received employer feedback on their work.
	Learners can demonstrate what they have learnt as a result of their experience of the workplace and articulate how this will inform their future decision making.
	Learners can evidence when they have applied careers knowledge, skills and behaviour within recruitment processes, such as mock interviews or mock assessment centres.
	Learners can compare their experiences of different workplaces and evaluate the impact each has had on their career readiness and decision making.
	Learners can critically assess how their experiences of the workplace have challenged stereotypes and raised their aspirations.