

Work experience

Ideas from students had a direct influence on one school's involvement with the 'What about us?' project. We interviewed two young men and asked them to give us some ideas about developments they would like to see in future in school. They both wanted to undertake further work experience – earlier in the year, both students had enjoyed a block work experience placement along with their peers in that year group. Now that their 'alternative' options had come to an end in school, they could see an opportunity for regular, weekly work experience and they wanted a placement working in a local charity shop.

Involvement with the project, and the deployment of some project funding, enabled both young men to have staff support for this. In the first instance, each student had one-to-one support for the whole weekly work experience session; as the placement progressed, the support was phased out until each student was working independently.

Both students were interviewed mid-way through the placement in order to gather their reflections. They were asked what they would change to improve on the work experience. One responded by giving his placement 'nine out of ten'. When asked 'what would make it a ten?', he said that he wanted an opportunity to work on the cash register at the checkout. The next week, the member of support staff negotiated this opportunity for the students and the perfect score of 'ten' was achieved. One of these young men now plans to go on to continue this type of work when he finishes school this year.