***The benefits of referring employers to other providers***

***Background***

This guide explains why referring employers to other providers - when you don’t offer the relevant T Level - is not just good customer service, but a smart, long-term move for strengthening your employer offer.

***Who is this resource for?***

This guidance is particularly helpful for T Level providers that offer a small number of programmes (typically 2-3).

***Why refer employers to other T Level providers?***

As a professional working in T Level employer engagement, your role is about more than simply placing students - it’s about building long-term relationships with employers. That means listening, understanding their needs, and helping them find the right solution.

Sometimes, the best response is: “We’re not the right fit for this, but we can help you find out who is.”

***Why referring works for you***

A well-judged referral is excellent customer service. When an employer approaches you for a placement in a subject area your institution doesn’t cover, referring them to a trusted local or national provider:

* Builds your credibility and shows you have their best interests at heart.
* Encourages repeat engagement - they’ll come back to you when they do need what you offer.
* Boosts word-of-mouth referrals - they’ll think of you when others talk about skills gaps and training needs.

***Why referring supports the bigger picture***

Currently only a small percentage of organisations are offering T Level industry placements. Human behaviour shows that as more employers get involved, others will start to follow suit - the snowball effect.

By making a referral now - and helping an employer connect with a more suitable provider – you’re enabling a placement to happen. That placement contributes to the momentum of T Levels locally. As interest grows, more businesses will get involved, and some will become your customers down the line.

Essentially, referrals help build that momentum, so all providers benefit in the long run.

***Examples of effective referrals***

* A college offering Engineering and Manufacturing T Levels is approached by an employer looking for Business and Administration placements. Knowing the employer isn’t interested in apprenticeships - and that they don’t offer this T Level - the college refers them to a neighbouring school that does, helping the employer place a student.
* A school, already working with a national employer, hears they need placement support in another part of England. To provide good service and maintain the relationship, the school helps identify a relevant provider in that region and connects the employer with them directly.
* An employer completely new to T Levels enquires about a placement your institution doesn’t cover. Rather than ignore the email, you call the employer to explore their needs. While you can’t help with their immediate request, you refer them on – and begin a conversation about future placements in the areas you do offer.

***Making a referral that strengthens employer relationships***

It goes without saying: respond to every employer enquiry - even if they’re asking about a subject you don’t deliver. Only by having that conversation can you uncover whether you might help now or in the future. Always follow up.

If, after speaking with the employer, it’s clear your institution can’t support them this time, then:

1. **Understand the employer’s need**

Get clarity on:

* Which T Level subject best fits their business
* Where the placement would take place (e.g. postcode)
* Any preferences for delivery (e.g. block vs. day release)
1. **Check for a suitable provider**

Rather than simply signposting them to the national T Level search, take five minutes to do the search for them (you can do it whilst on the phone) that’s the added value that builds trust.

* Go to the T Level Provider Search
* Enter the employer’s postcode and the relevant T Level to identify a nearby provider
* Click through to provider websites and look for the most appropriate contact email or phone number to give to the employer
1. **Follow up**

After you’ve pointed them in the right direction, follow up to see how they got on. This shows you care and helps build rapport for future engagement. You can also take the opportunity to ask if they know other employers who might benefit from your T Level offer and to signpost them to you.

***Building relationships with local providers***

If you’re in an area with other providers offering different T Level subjects, it’s worth building personal relationships with them directly.

From the employer’s point of view, a warm handover via email to someone who can help is excellent service - and it sets the tone for collaboration. If you help another provider with an employer referral, they’re likely to return the favour in the future.

For more guidance on working collaboratively with other T Level providers in your area, see: **Collaborating with Local Providers**