***Collaborating locally to create industry placements***

This resource explains why collaborating with industry can create new, meaningful, industry placements and gives real examples of what has worked for providers.

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

This resource is predominately for providers new to delivering T Levels, looking to connect with employers regionally that are trying to solve workforce and skills challenges.

***Why seek out collaborative opportunities?***

Creating meaningful, high-quality industry placements at scale requires more than individual employer outreach. By working collaboratively with local and sector-based networks, T Level providers can unlock opportunities that would be difficult to access in isolation. Place-based collaboration ensures industry placements align with the real workforce needs of the region – helping students, employers and communities benefit.

Whether it’s councils looking to improve youth employment outcomes, NHS Trusts tackling workforce shortages, or creative industries wanting to diversify their talent pipeline, there are often existing partnerships and networks already working on shared challenges. Plugging into these groups can provide a route to employers who are ready to support young people but need help to navigate the placement process.

***Where to find networks and collaborators***

Across England, a range of strategic partnerships and employer groups are already tackling skills issues. Some of the most useful networks include:

* **Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs):** Coordinated by employer representative bodies, these groups bring together providers and businesses to shape post-16 technical education around local economic priorities.
* **Chambers of Commerce, Growth Hubs and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs):** These organisations often run events, projects or forums that highlight skills challenges and provide access to employer groups.
* **Local councils and combined authorities:** Many local authorities run skills boards or economic development teams that are actively involved in employment and training initiatives.
* **Sector-specific partnerships:** Don’t overlook industry-focused bodies such as Integrated Care Systems (ICS) in the NHS, construction alliances, or creative sector consortia – these often coordinate region-wide approaches to talent and training.
* **Universities and anchor institutions:** Universities and large public bodies can act as regional anchors and often convene business networks or skills programmes that T Level providers can contribute to.

***How to connect with these networks***

Finding the right local or sector-specific network can take a bit of digging – but there are simple steps you can take to get started:

* **Search online using targeted terms.** Start by Googling combinations like “Local Skills Improvement Plan + [your region]” or “Integrated Care System + [your county]”. Many of these networks have websites or published plans that list key contacts and priorities.
* **Read your local LSIP.** The Local Skills Improvement Plan for your region is a valuable source of insight. It often includes named employer representative bodies, details of local skills priorities, and information about which industries are seeking more engagement with education providers.
* **Talk to your local authority.** Most councils have teams responsible for economic development, skills, or youth employment. These teams often sit on – or lead – local skills boards and can signpost you to relevant groups or employer contacts.
* **Reach out to trade bodies.** If you’re targeting a particular industry (e.g. health, construction, creative), national trade associations can often connect you with regional employer forums or local networks tackling sector-specific skills gaps.
* **Use LinkedIn or AI tools.** Try asking generative AI (like ChatGPT or Copilot) to summarise local skills initiatives in your region or point you towards the latest networks. LinkedIn can also be useful – search for recent events or updates using hashtags like #LSIP, #IndustryPlacements or #SkillsPartnership.
* **Ask your colleagues or senior leadership.** Chances are, someone in your organisation is already attending external meetings or engaging with these groups – whether through curriculum development, apprenticeships, or strategic planning. A quick internal conversation can help connect the dots.

Once you’ve found a network or contact point, don’t be afraid to introduce yourself and explain your role. Most partnerships are keen to involve education providers and will welcome your contribution – especially if you can offer practical routes to support young people into local careers.

***What collaboration looks like in practice***

Three recent interviews with T Level providers give a flavour of how collaboration can work in different ways:

***1. Kayleigh McCue, Camden Learning***

“I have a unique role at Camden Learning, which is a partnership linked to Camden Council. I support local schools to access T Level industry placements, as well as work around apprenticeships and skills.

“There are so many networks already out there that providers can tap into. Start with your local authority – ask what business groups or advisory boards already exist, and whether you can present at their meetings or events. Councils may even help host an event to raise the profile of T Levels in your area.

“Presenting at established forums has been really fruitful for us. I sit within the Camden STEAM team and have presented to our STEAM advisory board several times – including once alongside a Management & Administration T Level student placed with us. That’s directly led to several organisations offering placements.

“Also, look for community-based organisations with employer networks. I was introduced to KX Recruit – initially just to access their contacts – but after our chat I realised: why shouldn’t they host a student themselves? They agreed, and now they’re huge advocates. They love their student, don’t want the placement to end, and are already spreading the word about T Levels within their network.”

***2. Sam Lever, Activate Learning***

“In the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire region, our Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been a valuable forum for collaboration. It brings together education providers and NHS trusts to talk about workforce priorities – including how to develop industry placements. It’s been a great way to engage multiple employers efficiently and raise awareness of T Levels in the health and care sector.

“There are similar opportunities through LSIP working groups or Chambers of Commerce across Thames Valley and Surrey. These networks are employer-focused – which is a strength – but it means their agendas won’t always match yours. The trick is to find existing forums, like the ICB Care Board, where employers are already open to skills discussions.

“You can also collaborate with other T Level providers. Competition and time constraints are real barriers, but working together means employers get a more joined-up offer. One practical thing we’ve done is coordinate placement days across colleges, so students can be hosted without schedule clashes.

“We’re even exploring a ‘placement swap’ – where we host a student from another provider in our internal teams, and they do the same for one of ours. It’s early days, but it’s the kind of thinking that helps align our efforts and keep the employer experience front and centre.”

***3. Marie Webb, Kennet School***

“We knew getting placements for our Media, Broadcast and Production T Level students would be difficult without support – so we sought out local groups already working with employers. That led us to the Screen Industries subgroup of our LSIP.

“It includes employers like film studios and animation companies, alongside colleges, universities – and us, the only secondary school involved. They welcomed us in, and it quickly became clear we shared the same aim: helping young people break into the industry.

“We built a relationship with a local production company, who asked us to send over a brief – the number of students, hours needed, and what we hoped they’d get out of it.

“What started as a three-week group placement turned into something much bigger. The company offered to involve others in their supply chain, so students got experience across pre-production, filming, and post-production – stretching to five weeks in total.

“There were logistical challenges – transport, paperwork, coordinating expectations – but the outcomes were fantastic. The students gained real-world skills and confidence. Employers got to meet young talent and invest in the future of the sector. And we built stronger relationships with the local industry.”

To read the full CASE STUDY [visit here](Case%20study:%20using%20local%20networks%20to%20source%20industry%20placements%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)