Coventry young people take their case for work experience to Westminster

EMBARGOED until 18:30, Tuesday 10 November 2026

Sixteen young people from Bluecoat School and Barr's Hill School visited Westminster today, as a new campaign called on Coventry businesses to pledge work experience placements.

Today, 16 young people from Bluecoat School and Barr's Hill School in Coventry visited Westminster. They met the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Pat McFadden, and the Minister for Skills, Jacqui Smith, and made the case for every young person in Coventry to get a foot in the door. The visit will be covered on ITV News Central this evening.

The visit marked the launch of "Foot in the Door Coventry", a local campaign run with and for young people. Its petition asks Coventry businesses to pledge work experience placements for students at the city's schools. Young people in the city wrote its slogan, "make work experience work".

Coventry is a young city, with a median age five years below the average for England. Yet it has far fewer entry-level jobs for young people than most of the country. Research by the think tank IPPR found 62 suitable vacancies for every 1,000 people aged 18 to 24 in Coventry, against a UK average of 109.

Getting a foot in the door early helps young people get a foot in the door later. Young people who had more contacts with employers while at school were 86% less likely to be out of education, employment or training as young adults, according to the charity Education and Employers.

Praful Nargund, one of the campaign's organisers, said:

"Young people in Coventry deserve a foot in the door, whether that's getting work experience or making their pitch to Ministers. Too often work experience gets given to those with connections. This campaign is about making sure everyone has the chance to make the most of their potential. Just one week with a local business could open up futures they'd never imagined."

Gemma Hathaway, Senior Assistant Headteacher, Blue Coat Church of England School, said:

"Our students coined the slogan 'make work experience work', drawing on their own frustrations at the lack of opportunity across our city. The future workforce is already in our classrooms, and the experiences, relationships and opportunities we create today will help shape the possibilities of tomorrow. Sometimes meaningful change starts with something seemingly small: an introduction, an experience, a conversation. One foot in the door. But we have to be willing to open it."

Taiwo Owatemi MP (Coventry North West) said:

“I was delighted to invite students from Bluecoat School and Barr’s Hill School to Parliament today to launch the Foot in the Door Coventry campaign. These young people have spent months researching why too many students struggle to access meaningful work experience and have come to Westminster to make their case directly to ministers. Today is about showing them that their voices matter and giving them the opportunity to experience democracy in action by engaging directly with the issues that affect their future.

“We know that work experience can be life-changing, helping young people build confidence, develop skills and discover career paths they may never have considered. That’s why the Government is expanding opportunities through apprenticeships, the Youth Guarantee, support for small businesses taking on apprentices, and the new ‘Say What You Pay’ policy. Through Foot in the Door Coventry, I’m working to put in practice the Governments push for work experience and wider opportunities for young people.”

Supporters of the campaign can sign the petition at https://www.footinthedoorcoventry.co.uk/#sign. Businesses that want to offer a placement can get in touch at contact@footinthedoorcoventry.co.uk.

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Notes to editors

1. Foot in the Door Coventry is a campaign run with and for young people in Coventry. Its petition asks businesses and employers across the city to pledge work experience placements for young people. Businesses that want to take part can contact the campaign directly.
2. The vacancies figures come from IPPR’s local youth opportunity index, published with A better deal: Tackling the NEET crisis (Parkes and Morjaria, September 2026). It counts online job adverts in entry-level occupations from July 2025 to June 2026, averaged per quarter, per 1,000 people aged 18 to 24. The local figures are in the technical appendix.
3. The 86% figure comes from Education and Employers, Contemporary Transitions (2017), a YouGov survey of 1,744 people aged 19 to 24 carried out in May 2016. It covers all contact with employers, including talks and visits as well as placements.
4. The median age comes from Census 2021: 35 in Coventry, against 40 for England (ONS).
5. Praful Nargund is supporting organising this campaign in a personal capacity. He works as Director of the Good Growth Foundation and Skills Adviser to the Work and Pensions Secretary.
6. Photos from the visit are available on request.
7. Media contact: contact@footinthedoorcoventry.co.uk.