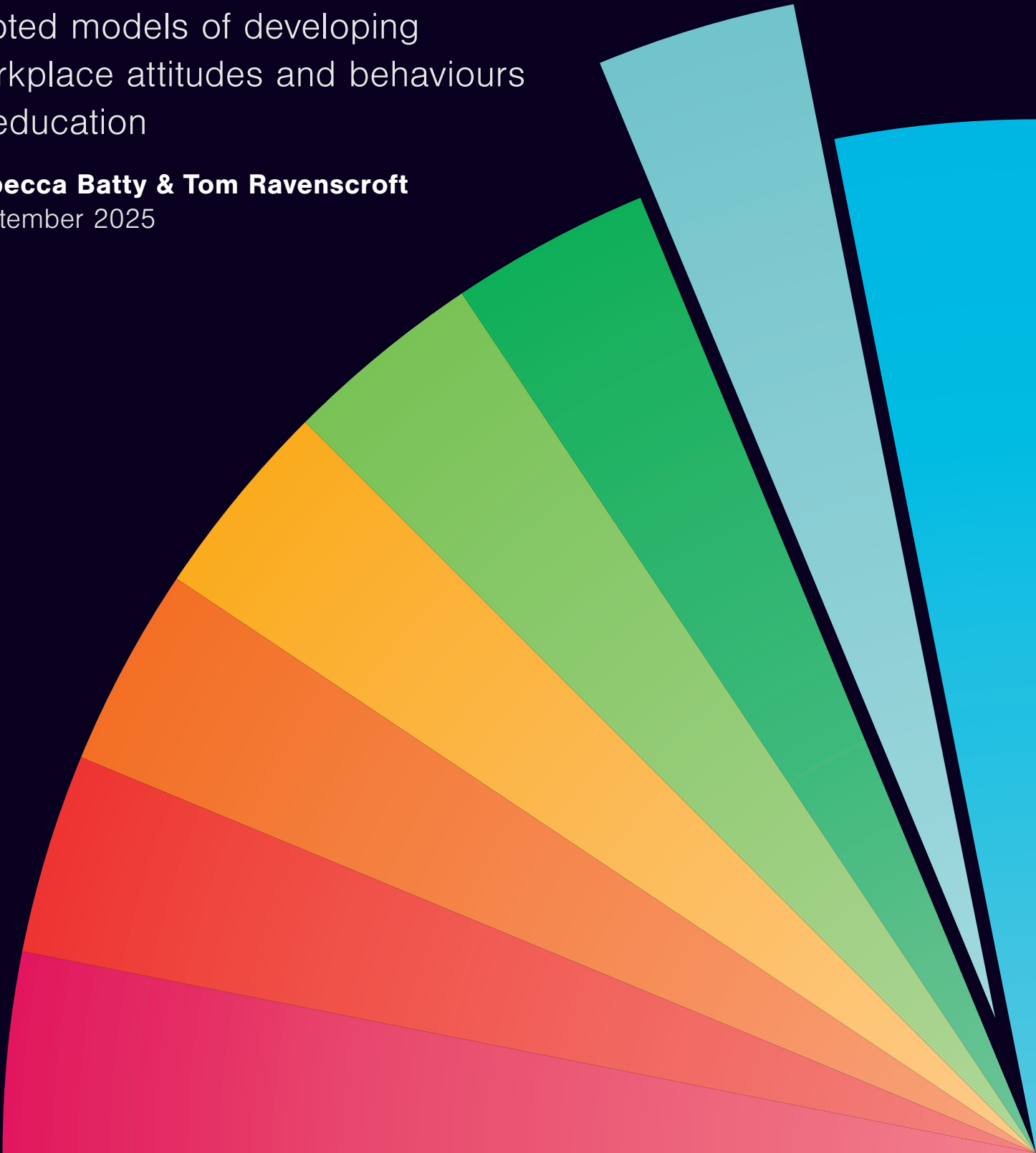


ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Piloted models of developing
workplace attitudes and behaviours
in education

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Piloted models of developing workplace attitudes and behaviours in education

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Executive summary

Skills Builder Partnership is a social enterprise which works to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to succeed. We work with educators, employers, and social impact organisations to develop individuals' communication, collaborative, self-management and creative problem solving skills by using a consistent language and model known as the Universal Framework. Established in 2009, the Partnership has fifteen years of experience of teaching and assessing essential skills.

The Commercial Education Trust is an independent grant-making charity, originally established by the London Charter of Commerce and Industry. The charity is committed to preparing young people for life and work by developing their *commercial ability*. Commercial ability is made up of five pillars: essential transferable skills, sector-specific know-how, basics for life, organisational know-how, and workplace attitudes and behaviours.

At the outset of this work, we sought to explore the interaction between essential skills development and attitudes & behaviour, with the aim of developing a scalable approach to the development of workplace attitudes and behaviours through the revised Universal Framework (2025). This comprised:

- Analysing definitions and measurement practices around work attitudes and behaviours
- Exploring the interaction between building essential skills and attitudes and behaviours, using both desk work and action research with teachers and learners on Skills Builder programmes in 2023-24
- Applying the learning to refining the Accelerator programme to run in 2024-25 and the Universal Framework revisions in 2025 to ensure that wherever possible, opportunities for building positive attitudes and behaviours are incorporated

This report details the process and outcomes of this work, culminating in the successful inclusion of several key workplace attitudes and behaviours into specific skill steps within the Universal Framework (2025).

The work to develop a scalable approach to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours through essential skills was undertaken in three key strands: the first, research into defining workplace attitudes and behaviours, including educators' perspectives on them, culminating in *Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills* (2024). The second strand was a piloted model of developing workplace attitudes and behaviours run by Skills Builder Partnership over the course of the academic year 2024-25. This piloted model included recommendations from the report, and tested strategies for teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours aligned to essential skills from the Universal Framework (2020). Finally, the Universal Framework Review (2025) comprised the third strand, offering a perfect opportunity to update the framework to more effectively and deliberately support users to build workplace attitudes and behaviours.

As a result of these three strands of work, we are able to provide clarity around key workplace attitudes and behaviours, through *Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills* (2024). From the key recommendations of that report, we were able to incorporate workplace attitudes and behaviours, specifically resilience, confidence, and being enterprising into the revised Universal Framework (2025). Through testing approaches to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours with a cohort of schools this year, we found 87% of participants indicated they were likely to use strategies and resources linked to the Universal Framework to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours with their learners alongside their essential skills programme. This paves the way for a successful approach to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours at scale through our programmes; with the revised Universal Framework providing deliberate and specific teaching resources and strategies to support the development of resilience, confidence, and being enterprising.

Key findings

- Essential skills support the development of workplace attitudes and behaviours: the Universal Framework now includes specific steps to support practising resilience and being enterprising
- 87% of participants in our trial approach to building workplace attitudes and behaviours through essential skills indicated they were very likely to use the strategies and resources in the future
- Educators continue to identify a lack of time as a barrier to teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours

Introduction

Employers consistently highlight the importance of attitude and aptitude in their recruitment processes. In 2022, 78% of employers in the CBI Education and Skills survey ranked this as their most important factor when recruiting school or college leaders.¹ But it is often unclear what an attitude and aptitude for work actually means. Whilst an aptitude for work from an employer perspective may include an employee's capabilities and skills, an attitude for work remains more of an elusive concept.²

In conjunction with the Commercial Education Trust, we set out to explore how workplace attitudes and behaviours could be developed with a wide range of learners, in a model which could be easily scaled across a variety of educational settings. Using over 15 years of experience developing a model for teaching essential skills at scale across a wide range of educational settings, we considered 3 key questions:

- What are workplace attitudes and behaviours?
- How do they interact with essential skills?
- How could they be developed at scale?

To address the first question, we published *Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills* (Barron & Ravenscroft, 2024). To address how they could interact with essential skills, and be developed at scale, we took the opportunity to trial approaches to building 4 key workplace attitudes and behaviours alongside skills from the Universal Framework (2020). As we were already undertaking the Universal Framework Review, the results of the report and trialled approaches provided the perfect opportunity to incorporate workplace attitudes and behaviours into the revised Universal Framework (2025), where they could be developed at scale with learners through our existing programmes and resources.

What are workplace attitudes and behaviours?

Previously *Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills* (Barron & Ravenscroft, 2024), undertaken by Skills Builder Partnership with support from the CET, discussed key issues in building workplace attitudes and behaviours:

- A lack of clear definitions for behaviours
- A lack of consensus for how best to teach workplace attitudes and behaviours
- A lack of appropriate assessment for workplace attitudes and behaviours.

The report suggested that any intervention which sought to effectively develop workplace attitudes and behaviours must first contend with these issues.

Attitudes, Behaviours, and Essential Skills sought to define workplace attitudes and behaviours. Within the teacher survey of the report, educators were asked to rank which workplace attitudes and behaviours they thought were most important for working life.

¹ CBI (2022:9).

² Gutman and Schoon (2013), and Skills Builder Partnership (2022) identify how 'non-cognitive' and essential skills affect employment prospects.

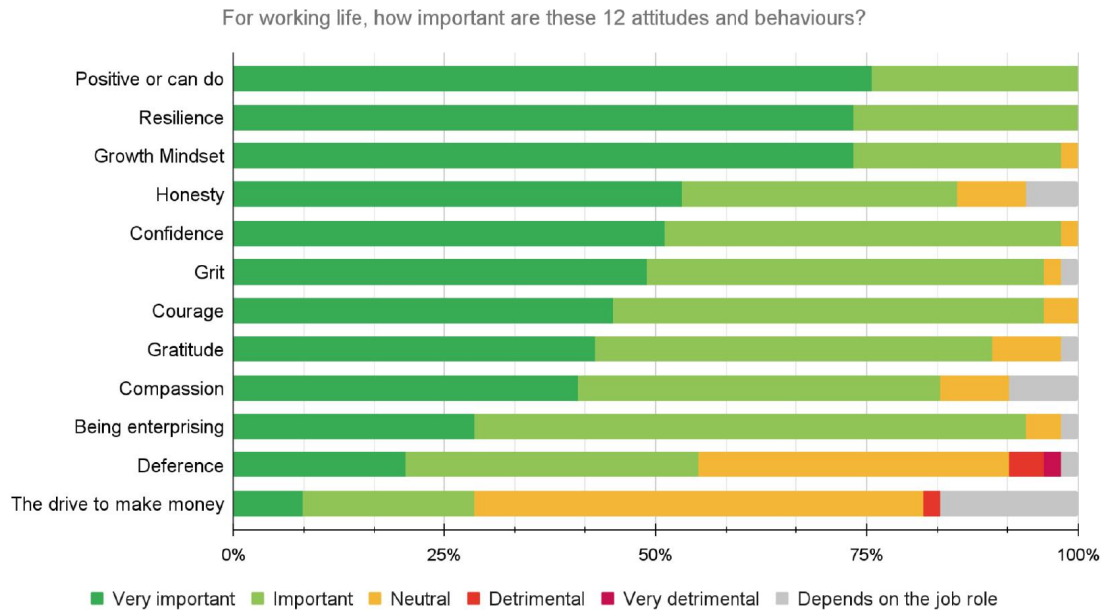


Fig. 1 Teacher perceptions of the importance of attitudes and behaviours for working life

These results, combined with the findings from the literature review, identified four key workplace behaviours with widespread support:

- Resilience³ (ability to withstand adversity)
- Confidence (believing in yourself and your abilities)
- A positive or 'can-do' attitude⁴ (approaching challenges with optimism)
- An enterprising mindset (resourcefulness and initiative to spot and make the most of opportunities)

To then address the lack of consensus for how to teach workplace attitudes and behaviours, the educator survey asked respondents to rank teaching strategies they perceived to be most effective, and how frequently they used those strategies.

³ Duckworth et al (2007) discusses the importance of 'grit' and perseverance for success in long term goals. Further discussion of grit, resilience and essential skills can be found in Barron and Ravenscroft (2024, 14).

⁴ The importance of a growth mindset and a positive attitude is discussed further in Dweck (2007). Further discussion of growth mindset and essential skills can be found in Barron and Ravenscroft (2024, 10).

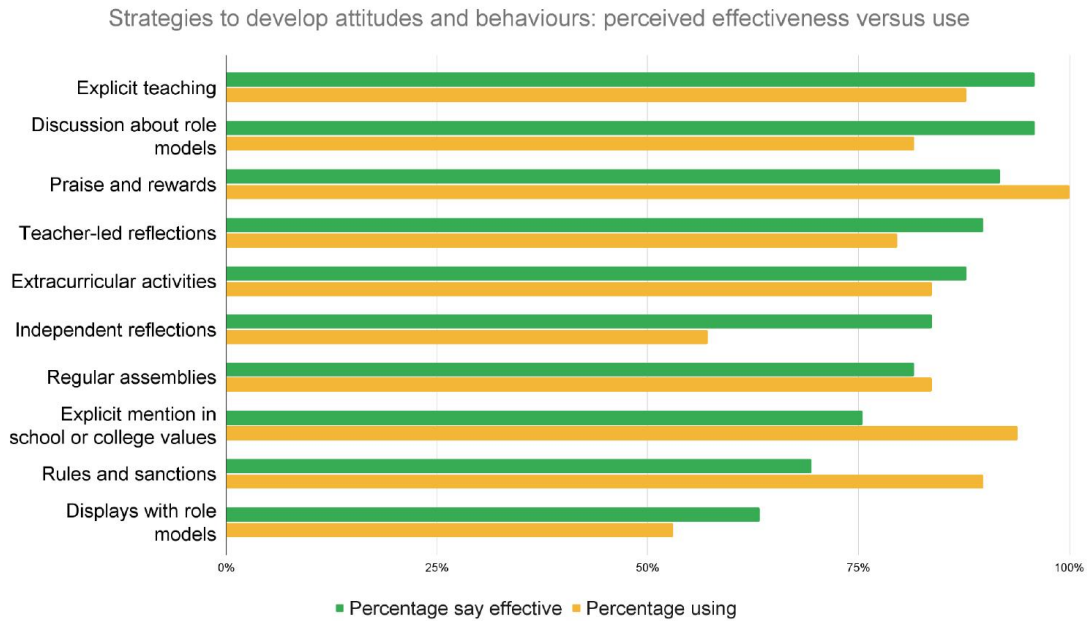


Fig. 2 Teachers perceptions of the effectiveness of strategies to build attitudes and behaviours, compared to the percentage of teachers using these strategies.

Fundamentally, educators within the survey believed that workplace attitudes and behaviours can be taught. However, it was clear there was a contradiction between some of the strategies being used by educators, and how effective they felt they were in developing workplace attitudes and behaviours. To avoid perpetuating this contradiction, any piloted model for developing these workplace attitudes and behaviours must address the most effective strategies, and encourage the adoption of effective yet lesser used techniques.

Educators were also asked which tools and resources would help them to develop learners' attitudes and behaviours.

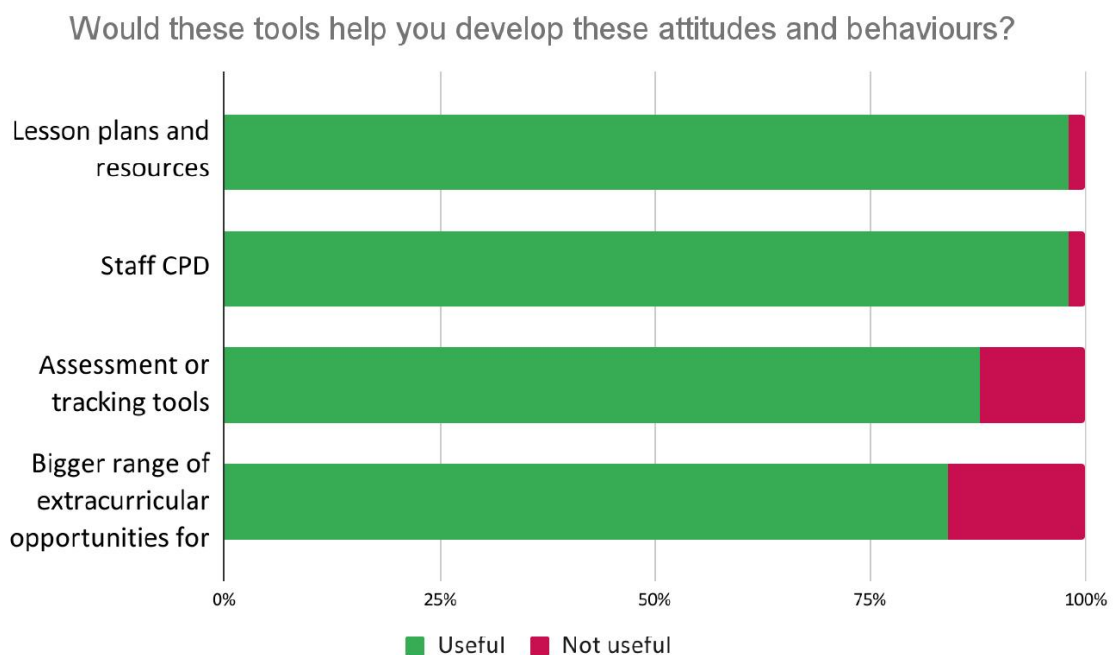


Fig. 3 Teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of tools and resources to help develop attitudes and behaviours

Interestingly, whilst a lack of appropriate assessment for workplace attitudes and behaviours had been identified as an issue within the literature review, the educators surveyed did not feel that assessment or tracking tools would be a useful tool for them to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours with their learners. Overwhelmingly, 98% of respondents felt that practical resources and staff training would be most beneficial; this highlighted the need for practical support such as lesson plans, resources, and specific training in any model which seeks to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, the report set out key recommendations for developing workplace attitudes and behaviours. For Skills Builder Partnership:

- Consider opportunities to create a consistent language around positive workplace attitudes and behaviours through updates to the Universal Framework
- Consider opportunities to provide training to support its network of teachers develop key attitudes and behaviours, incorporating strategies educators considered most effective.

From these recommendations, at the start of September 2024 we created a model for building workplace attitudes and behaviours alongside essential skills that could be adopted and shared in education more widely.

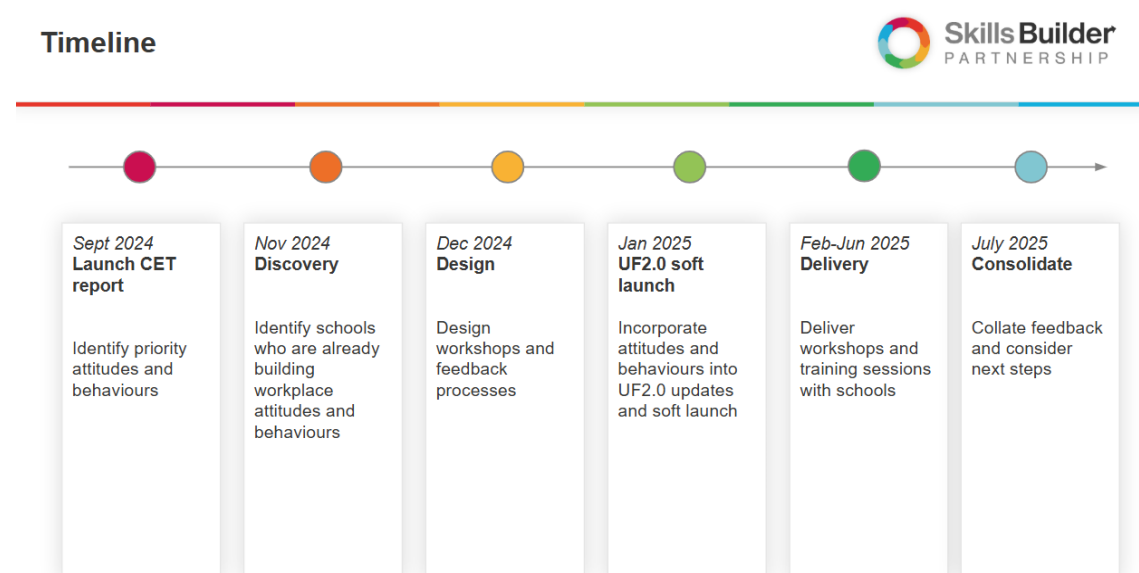


Fig. 4 Timeline for the development of workplace attitude and behaviour training sessions

The piloted model

Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills (2024) identified that educators think workplace attitudes and behaviours are important, but are lacking resources to support teaching. The next phase of our work covered piloting approaches to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours through strategies and resources aligned with the Universal Framework (2020). This trial would test the hypothesis that building workplace attitudes and behaviours into the revised Universal Framework (2025) would support educators to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours with their learners. As such, we created a series of pilot training sessions which explored how steps and associated teaching resources from the Universal Framework (2020) could be used to support the development of resilience, confidence, a positive or 'can-do' attitude, and an enterprising mindset. We then sought feedback on how useful educators found this connection, how those workplace attitudes and behaviours interact with essential skills in their setting, and how likely educators would be to use the revised Universal Framework to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours with their learners in the future.

We created a series of training sessions which could be piloted among a wide range of educators who were already familiar with the Universal Framework and essential skills. For our pilot, we focused on educational settings participating in a programme with Skills Builder Partnership this year. This included a range of experience with essential skills; those who had been building essential skills with their learners for many years, and those who were just beginning their journey.

In developing our training offer, we sought to address the recommendations from the report; this meant our training needed to cover:

- Clear definitions (linked to the Universal Framework)
- Effective teaching strategies
- Resources to support

By the end of the training session, we wanted participants to feel more confident developing resilience, confidence, a positive or 'can-do' attitude, or an enterprising mindset with their learners. We wanted participants to have an awareness of the definitions of specific workplace attitudes and behaviours, as well as how steps from the Universal Framework could support them to build those behaviours with their learners. Lastly, we wanted to ensure that participants were aware of specific teaching strategies and resources available through Skills Builder Partnership that could support them to build workplace attitudes and behaviours with their learners. With these outcomes, we could test to see how an approach to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours at scale through the Universal Framework might look in an educational setting.

Roundtable discussion

To include practitioners at the heart of our model, we held a roundtable discussion for educators who self-identified as particularly strong or skilled in developing resilience, confidence, a positive or 'can-do' attitude, or an enterprising mindset with their learners.

From this roundtable discussion we were able to further deepen our understanding of the training needs of educators, and what 'best practice' in developing these workplace attitudes and behaviours could look like. A central theme of the discussion was how essential skills could underpin the development of workplace attitudes and behaviours. Resilience became a key focus for participants, who felt that this can often be the most necessary yet also the most difficult attitude to develop.

Through building essential skills with their learners, many participants felt that their learners were in a better position to enter the workplace.

“Employers aren’t asking for traditional history... Instead it’s communication, leadership, management, all underpinned with resilience and confidence.” (Harrison College)

Training design

As a result of the report and roundtable discussion, we developed four training workshops for educators on a programme with Skills Builder Partnership in the academic year 2024-25. Each training session would focus on a different workplace attitude or behaviour, which were being considered to be included in the Universal Framework review.

- Resilience (ability to withstand adversity)
- Confidence (believing in yourself and your abilities)
- A positive or ‘can-do’ attitude (approaching challenges with optimism)
- An enterprising mindset (resourcefulness and initiative to spot and make the most of opportunities)

Each training session followed the same format:

- An overview of key research around the workplace attitude or behaviour
- An opportunity to consider the definition of the focus workplace attitude or behaviour.
- Specific steps and essential skills from the Universal Framework which support those attitudes and behaviours.

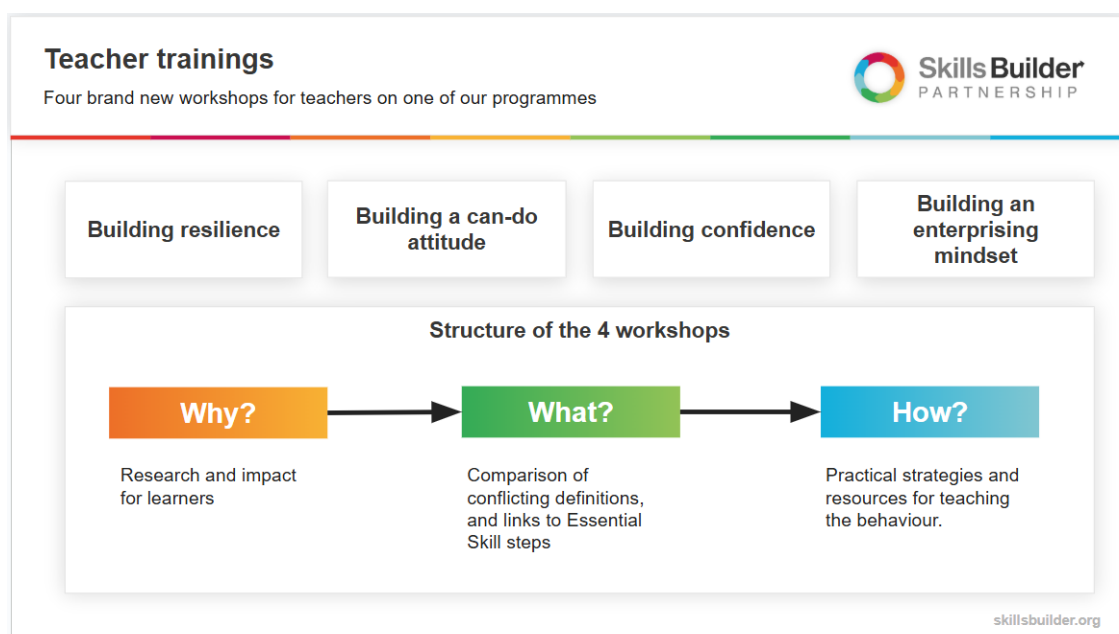


Fig. 6 An overview of the structure for each workplace behaviour training



Step 1: I complete tasks by finding someone to help if I need them

Step 2: I complete tasks by explaining problems to someone for advice if I need



Step 1: I know what doing well looks like for me

Step 3: I work with pride when I am being successful



Step 2: I keep trying when things go wrong

Step 7: I look for opportunities in difficult situations

skillsbuilder.org

Fig. 7 An example from the resilience training session, where the workplace behaviour has been linked to specific skill steps from the Universal Framework.

Each training then covered three of the highest rated teaching strategies, most appropriate to each behaviour. Discussion of these strategies were linked to existing resources from the Skills Builder Hub to practically support the development of these behaviours.

Each session could be delivered by Education Associates to a range of educators familiar with essential skills. They could be delivered to large groups of teachers, smaller pastoral groups, or even with one member of staff who could then share strategies and resources with their colleagues. This flexibility allowed for a greater range of participation from educators.

At the end of each session, we sought feedback from participants, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of each training.

Response

Take up: successes and barriers

From January-July 2025 we offered the four training sessions to all schools on an Accelerator, Accelerator+, or Digital Membership programme with Skills Builder Partnership in the academic year 2024-25. We delivered the training sessions to over 180 educators, from a wide range of educational settings. This includes sessions delivered as 1 to 1 training, whole staff training sessions, and after school webinars.

- 44% of the sessions we delivered were to educators working in a specialist setting
- 26% were delivered to secondary settings
- 26% were delivered to post 16 settings
- 4% of the training sessions were delivered to educators working in a primary setting⁵

Phase of educational setting taking part in workplace attitude and behaviour training

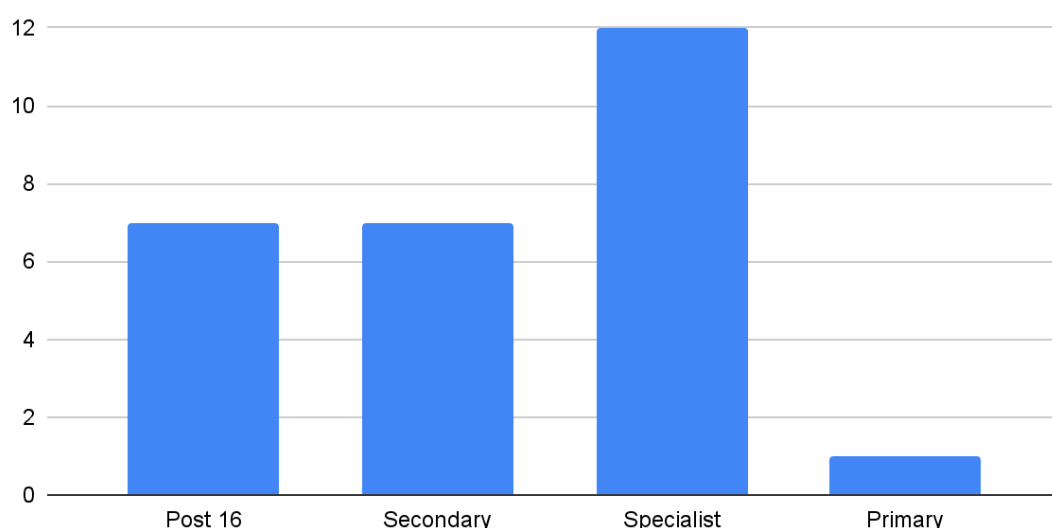


Fig. 8 Breakdown by phase for educational settings who took part in a training session

Often, educators asked for sessions which combined one or more of the behaviours, leading to combined sessions being the most popular type of training delivered. This desire for combined trainings reiterates the challenges in securing time for training that educators often face;⁶ however it could also indicate a lack of clarity or specificity between how educators perceive these behaviours. Often, combinations of resilience, confidence, or a positive 'can-do' attitude were requested. The previously identified issue with a lack of clear, consistent definitions for workplace attitudes and behaviours could be reflected here; educators may regard each individual behaviour as a nebulous 'group' of behaviours that they would like their learners to build.

⁵ Where only one primary setting attended a training, two other primaries were booked and cancelled due to staff shortages or time conflicts. Overall, primary schools in general were much less likely to choose a workplace behaviour training - this could potentially indicate that educators working with younger learners may see them as less relevant.

⁶ Connolly V (2023).

Resilience and confidence were the most popular training topics, often as combined sessions. Interestingly, building an enterprising mindset was the least popular training; this perhaps reflects more pressing issues around resilience and confidence within educational settings, whilst building entrepreneurial skills could be seen as less important, or at least immediately beneficial for their learners.

Breakdown by training topic

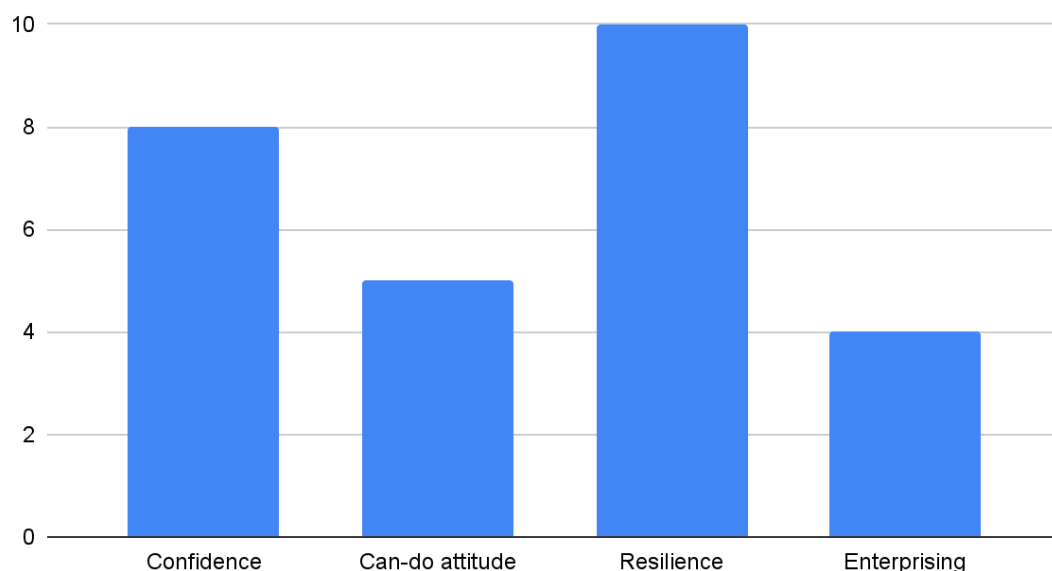


Fig.9 Breakdown of the popularity of each training topic, delivered between January 2025-July 2025.

Feedback

Participants were asked to respond via Zoom poll or Google form, depending on their method of delivery. Overall, we received 45 responses from an estimated total of 180 participants (25%). In sessions with a large number of participants, especially for partners with less access to individual devices, some participants were unable to provide feedback individually. In some sessions, the person who had booked the session completed the feedback on behalf of all participants. Whilst the lower rate of responses to participants provides a limitation in understanding how broadly the responses reflect all participants, the feedback comments that were received provide rich detail and insights into educators attitudes in teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours, and how they felt about the training sessions.

1. On a scale of 1-5, how confident did you feel teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours prior to this training?

Participants ranked their confidence in teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours prior to the training. Of the 45 responses, participants most commonly ranked themselves a 3 out of a possible 5.

2. On a scale of 1-5, how confident do you feel teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours now?

Participants also ranked their confidence teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours after the training. Over 66% of participants reported an increase in confidence; a third of respondents reported an increase of two increments.

Those who saw no increase in confidence were generally those who had ranked themselves either a 4 or 5 to begin with; however, their comments still showed that the material in the training sessions had been useful.

"I feel confident teaching workplace attitudes. I can break down key concepts like professionalism, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and a positive mindset in practical, relatable ways." (Al Abrar School)

3 & 4. How likely are you to use any of the strategies covered in today's training? Please give a reason for your response

All participants were likely to use the strategies described in the training, with 87% rating 'very likely'.

Whilst individual comments varied, the responses can be largely grouped into three categories:

- Positive responses to the practical nature of the teaching strategies, and how they can be used immediately within their own teaching:

"I have some ideas now of things I can do in school." (The Academy, Selsey)

"The strategies are all easy to implement and go hand in hand with the skills builder framework that is already in place". (Waltham Forest College)

- Enthusiasm about the ready made resources hosted on a platform with which they were already familiar:

"It was great to see how resources available on Skills Builder Hub can help to support resilience." (Al Hadi Institute for the Deaf, Blind, and Learning Disabilities)

"I would use the resources shown during the session (short lesson, skill passports) because they will definitely increase the quality of my teaching including the students' own reflections." (Treehouse School)

- An appreciation for having the time to specifically consider how to teach workplace attitudes and behaviours:

"was unsure how to approach it without causing unforeseen issues but more confident in trying techniques shared" (Ormiston Bushfield Academy)

"Whole school ideas and approach discussed." (St Helen's Primary)

5. What did you find most useful about this training?

Respondents were positive about the utility of the strategies and resources suggested, with many comments highlighting specific resources, or strategies they would like to use:

“chatting through reminders and showing what is available in Skills Builder Hub , and explicitly linking it to enterprise” (Manor Green College)

“Resources are already available to use” (St Helen’s Primary)

“The most useful thing is that there are lots of strategies to do in order to support students.”
(Al Abrar School)

*“Exploring the hub and/or benchmark.
Thinking about how this relates to our teaching across the college.”* (Leyton Sixth Form College)

The participants’ focus on specific strategies or resources echoes the initial aim of including practical resources for educators, and suggests that further work must continue to include resources and strategies that can be easily adopted and used, with links to existing structures within the educational setting.

6. Is there anything that could help support you further in teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours?

In terms of what could be done to further support the teaching of workplace attitudes and behaviours, several respondents suggested further training sessions, either delivered as a webinar or as personalised training sessions for each school. Some participants also indicated a desire for further work to be done in developing workplace attitudes and behaviours for learners with SEND.

“More teaching resources and activities e.g. videos” (Leyton Sixth Form College)

“More training specifically linked to workplace attitudes and behaviours please.” (Al Hadi Institute for the Deaf, Blind, and Learning Disabilities)

“If there are examples for SEND schools, of this working well , but I guess we are one of the pilots of this .” (Manor Green College)

As specialist settings comprised 44% of the participants, this could have skewed the feedback; however, it also highlights a potential need for a more bespoke approach to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours within SEND settings. Future work could cover more training for educators, but also include pilot approaches in tandem with specialist settings to gain further insight into how learners with SEND can develop their workplace behaviours.

Stories

Chester West and Chester Council Skills and Employment (CWAC)

Educators from CWAC attended both an Enterprising Mindset training and Confidence through essential skills. As a result of the training, CWAC have decided to revisit the way they teach entrepreneurial behaviours to incorporate the specific skill steps and resources from the training. Now, on the days where educators support learners directly, enterprise challenges are incorporated into teaching and learning.

"I can see the links clearly now between what I have been trying to do and thinking of doing, with the enterprising mind set."

CWAC have also begun to incorporate more supported learner reflection on skills, as a way of developing recognition of workplace behaviours for their learners. This has supported learners when applying for jobs, as they can directly link their essential skills and experience to more nebulous concepts such as resilience, confidence, and being enterprising.

"I found this incredibly useful because it made me think about confidence in different ways, not just as something linked to Staying Positive, which has been an immediate 'go to' for learners. It made me consider again how different confidence looks for individuals, what this means to them and how to directly link this to a variety of statements, not just within Staying Positive, but other skills as well. This opens up more possibilities for me when considering how I will implement activities in sessions. I have decided to use 'Build it' more in this way, so interns can link their chosen targets to these sections before then linking them directly to their workplace."

Leyton Sixth Form College

10 educators from Leyton Sixth Form College participated in the Building a 'can-do attitude' through Essential Skills training. Staff have been using essential skills and the Universal Framework to support a range of qualifications for 2 years. As a result of the training, educators from Leyton Sixth Form College have decided to use skill workbooks to support independent learning for their learners; this will ensure their learners can build their workplace attitudes and behaviours through skills both within curriculum time, and in self directed learning. The use of workbooks also provides a structure for learners to reflect on their skills, supporting them with practical examples when they write their CVs or apply to jobs.

"I believe the workbook will be an essential tool to help students reach their goals"

The Universal Framework Review

Alongside the testing phase with educators, an extensive review of the Universal Framework was being undertaken. Driven by advisory groups spanning education, impact organisations, employers, sector bodies and international users, the goals of the review were to evaluate and then improve the Universal Framework in five dimensions: completeness; relevance; usability; consistency of interpretation; and inclusivity.⁷ Additionally, as the first part of this project, *Attitudes, Behaviours and Essential Skills* (2024) identified, the review considered opportunities to be more deliberate in supporting users to build specific workplace attitudes and behaviours. As a result of the review, 11 new steps were created, and 15 concepts were incorporated into the existing step architecture. Within the Adapting skill, the steps Practising Resilience, Supporting Resilience, and Being Enterprising were included. Steps to support confidence were retained as part of the Planning skill (Identifying Successes, and Recognising Strengths). The revised Universal Framework (2025) now includes specific and deliberate steps to build workplace attitudes and behaviours, contributing to a consistent language around positive attitudes and behaviours.

The success of the piloted models of developing workplace attitudes and behaviours alongside essential skills, and the participants likelihood of using materials suggested in the trainings shows the potential for educators to immediately 'get to grips' with the revised Universal Framework (2025), using it to build positive workplace attitudes and behaviours alongside their essential skills programme. The revised Universal Framework (2025), estimated to be used with over 200 educational settings in 2025 in the UK alone thus provides the perfect opportunity to support the development of workplace attitudes and behaviours at scale.

⁷ Ravenscroft, T., Craig, R. & Stewart, G. (2025).

Implications and next steps

Overall, the feedback from the piloted training sessions indicates that educators value an approach to developing workplace attitudes and behaviours that fits within their existing skill programmes. Educators also appreciate continual training around workplace attitudes and behaviours; particularly when it includes practical, usable strategies and resources. As such, any approach which seeks to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours at scale in education should ensure training and resources are provided, and that the work can fit with existing programmes.

Results of the Universal Framework Review

During the Universal Framework Review, consideration was given to how the Universal Framework can be more deliberate in supporting users to build workplace attitudes and behaviours.

The updated version of the Universal Framework now includes explicit steps regarding practising and supporting resilience (Adapting Step 11 and Step 12), and being enterprising (Adapting Step 16).⁸ Using explicit skill steps alongside the teaching strategies and resources identified in the piloted training models supports educators further in identifying and teaching workplace behaviours.

More broadly, inclusion of these workplace attitudes and behaviours in the Universal Framework, used by over 940 partner organisations, contributes to the creation of a consistent language around positive attitudes and behaviours.

All Skills Builder Partnership educational programmes working directly with schools and colleges also use the Universal Framework; with the inclusion of workplace attitudes and behaviours into the revised Framework, educational settings can effectively build them with their learners as part of their existing skills programme.

Recommendations for Skills Builder resources

At Skills Builder Partnership, we should continue to consider opportunities to develop workplace attitudes and behaviours further through teaching resources and teacher training sessions. For example, in future training sessions with educators, the partnership could emphasise how the steps from the Universal Framework can be used to support the development of resilience, confidence, and being enterprising. Skills Builder Partnership could also consider webinar events for educators which explore how to teach workplace behaviours through essential skills for an audience of educators who may not currently participate through a programme.

With the revised Universal Framework (2025), all our programmes and resources will be updated to reflect the revised content. This means that for the new skill steps building workplace behaviours, there will be a selection of bespoke lessons and materials to support educators. Future resource development could consider scaffolded resources to support independent reflection, particularly in the development of pre-made resources for learners in Post 16 settings. Participants from a setting supporting SEND learners also identified a need for more examples and a wider range of resources to support the learners with SEND. For Skills Builder Partnership, this could include broadening the range of inclusive resources on the Hub, in partnership with SEND settings.

⁸ Skills Builder Partnership (2024) *The Universal Framework*. Available at: <https://www.skillsbuilder.org/universal-framework>

Wider recommendations

It is clear to see the subsequent inclusion of explicit steps linked to resilience and being enterprising that the Universal Framework provides a practical and clear basis for teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours at scale. Participant feedback highlighted the ease of use of the framework, particularly supported by pre-made resources. This addresses the identified need for clear language, practical strategies, and accessible resources, in a way that is demonstrably useful for educators when teaching workplace attitudes and behaviours.

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