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The OCR Guide to

Best Practice in Work Experience

Version 1

OCR

This guide has been written for OCR by the Institute for Education Business Excellence (IEBE).

The Institute for Education Business Excellence (IEBE) is a professional body dedicated to improving the employability and life chances of young people. Created in June 2009, the IEBE sets and safeguards the standards for all types of work experiences up to the age of 19. IEBE do this by providing professional accreditation for individuals and quality assurance for organisations. Work experiences delivered by professionals working to the highest possible standards help make young people more empowered, employable and entrepreneurial. For more information, please visit www.iebe.org.uk.

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

Using this guide

This guide on best practice for work experience has been produced by OCR to help you understand the skills and techniques you will need to develop, practice and use in studying for your chosen qualification. This guide has not been written to accompany a specific qualification but focuses on skills that relate to many areas of both education and work environments. Other skills guides are available at ***www.ocr.org.uk***.

Work experience is time spent on an employer's premises to observe, learn and gain experience of the working world whilst the learner is still at school. It is not paid employment, but is an opportunity for any young person aged 14 or over and still in education (attending school, college or university) to put classroom theory into working practice.

This Guide is arranged into three sections addressing **Teachers** (the schools and colleges teaching OCR TEC qualifications), the **Learners** taking these qualifications, and the **Employers** offering work experience to support them. It concludes with sector specific guidance, incorporating case studies that set out the benefits of work experience to the three sectors which are the focus of this guide.

Work experience has for generations been accepted as a worthwhile compliment to time spent at school, and is the most widespread example of employers supporting education. On average, nearly 500,000 young people participate in work experience every year supported by thousands of employers - both large corporates and small family businesses – in industries of all types.

It is widely recognised that work experience is a crucial supplement to any young person's formal education. Using relevant local examples from employers the young people may or may not know are operating on their door step, the opportunity helps to bring subjects alive. As the case studies demonstrate, there are benefits for learners, employers and educators.

Finally, work experience can be a critical element of the recruitment cycle. It is important that young people leave education not just with qualifications, but with other skills and high quality experiences to help them become and remain economically active. Just as young people go into exams having had time to prepare for them, high quality work experience is one important way to help young people prepare for future employment.

BEST PRACTICE FOR TEACHERS

Getting involved in work experience

Introduction

First and foremost, it is important that the work experience placement meets the needs of all those involved. This means the learner who will be attending the placement, the employer who is providing the placement, as well as you, who will using the placement to support the teaching you are providing to your learners. This guide it will help you navigate through the processes involved to provide successful placements for all your learners.

A thorough approach to this is important for a long term benefit – you need to think of future learners as well as the current ones. It may take time to build effective relationships with a range of different employers, but an investment over the long-term will pay dividends.

Benefits

For teachers, work experience provides a number of important benefits:

- Enhances the vocational curriculum by providing direct links to real business scenarios;
- Helps to raise learner motivation and adds significant levels of applied learning to course content, which in turn helps to raise the levels of participation and attainment; and,
- Supports teaching staff by providing direct business links to course subjects, which in turn enhance course content and support delivery.

Overall, work experience helps to bring a subject alive by demonstrating how aspects of it apply directly to the workplace, which in turn helps you to teach it and the learners to understand it.

Finding a work experience placement

Firstly, it is beneficial for learners to complete an application form, or in the very least prepare a CV to outline their existing experience, and identify what they really want to achieve on work experience. There is some guidance in the learners section on preparing a CV and also in OCR's employability skills guide, which can be downloaded from www.ocr.org.uk.

There are a number of ways to source and secure a work experience placement. You could try to establish and maintain your own database of organisations willing to offer work experience placements. You could use contacts you already have, but you will need to bear in mind that the information on the database is only valid if up to date and relevant.

As will be outlined further on, you have a duty of care to ensure each environment is a safe and appropriate place for a young person. Good administration and clear record keeping are also really important to ensure you know who is going where, who has been written to and who you next need to contact so an organised approach is essential.

If the above scenario is not possible or sounds a little daunting, help is at hand by using a quality assured provider registered with the Institute of Education Business Excellence (IEBE) - the professional body for all practitioners involved in developing young people's employability They will follow best practice to source placements, leaving you time to concentrate on the learners themselves, supporting them to think about what they want to achieve whilst on work experience and how this will in turn help to benefit their course in the short term and their future employment in the long term.

The third way to source placements is via the learners themselves. Potential placements may be suggested from personal contacts (friends and family) but bear in mind these will all still need to be followed up and checked out.

Planning for a successful placement

Allow sufficient time to plan

To make each placement successful, planning your approach over a couple of months allows sufficient time to prepare the learners beforehand, find the placements, and ensure they are in a safe environment, especially if there are a number of learners are going out at the same time.

Learners Preparation

As the educator, it is your responsibility to prepare the learners for their work experience placement, the process of which is also excellent practice for the real world of work. The use of a quality assured provider may again be advisable if you are unable to do this yourself. Either they or you could offer and deliver some work preparation support which may include:

Completing an application form and preparing a CV

This could be at the request of a potential work experience employer and/or simply providing some good practice that can be used when applying for a part-time job whilst at still at school, or a full-time job after leaving school.

This is the opportunity to identify the strengths of each learner, highlighting some of the skills they have possibly developed through past work experience or qualities they feel they have, hobbies they enjoy, or voluntary work they have been involved in. They can also use this opportunity to identify qualifications already achieved and promote themselves as an individual. Collectively, this will ensure learners start to understand the importance of providing sufficient information to make them stand out from others and potentially secure employment.

Interview practice

A vital piece of support for learners is the opportunity to practice interviews, either through role play or interactive workshops presented by business personnel. This will help them to develop some of the skills and techniques they need to learn before they meet their employer for the first time. There is no such thing as too much preparation when it comes to attending interviews.

Travel arrangements

To attend their placements, learners may have to rely on lifts from friends or family or use public transport. If they are old enough, some of them may have their own means of transport. Identifying any potential problems with particular individual journeys will help to ascertain where a learner can realistically travel to for their placement. It should also be acknowledged that pushing the boundaries of where the learners could travel to will of course also provide a better chance of securing a placement that is right for them.

Recapping what skills an employer is looking for

Regardless of the placement type, each employer will be looking for similar transferable skills around communication, personal presentation, teamwork, using initiative, timekeeping and a can do attitude, which can be vital in demonstrating how the learner can add value to a employer.

Helping learners by highlighting these standard and important key skills will help them prepare themselves. Offering workshops or sessions based on a range of topics such as interview techniques, dress codes and appropriate clothing for the work place, customer service & telephone techniques, rights and responsibilities and team work, will help provide specific opportunities to highlight and practice before starting work experience.

Understanding the risks and learner responsibilities

Before going into a workplace and being asked to do tasks that may be unfamiliar to them, it is a good idea to outline what responsibilities and duty of care lay with the learner as well as the employer. OCR's employability and legislation skills guides contain relevant information and can be downloaded from www. ocr.org.uk.

Written confirmation

It is advisable to put everything in writing so that the learner, the employer and you all have a copy of the same paperwork to confirm the dates of the work experience placement, the location, duties and so on. This paperwork will also help each learner to record their learning and in turn to support their studies.

Up to date and relevant job description

Before the learner commences their work experience it is important that they have a relevant job description, outlining key tasks they will be expected to do during the placement, minimum level of experience required and skills that will be developed by the end of the placement.

If it is a placement you or the learner has personally sourced, it is important to ensure that the details are still relevant and the contact hasn't changed. A letter confirming this, a telephone call or a visit will soon make sure the details are accurate before passing them onto your learner.

If outsourced to a quality assured provider, the placement will automatically be checked on your behalf, ensuring all relevant details and health and safety arrangements are up to date before forwarding the job description to you, and in due course, the learner.

Central point of contact

Leading up to and during the placement, it is helpful to have a central point of contact in your school/college for the participating learners and employers should the need arise for them to get in touch. Ideally, this should be someone who knows the learners and the work experience arrangements and who can provide support to the work experience placements from start to finish. For the same reasons, employers are also asked to provide a single point of contact for and their name should appear on the original paperwork.

Responsibilities

Health and safety

Prior to going on work experience, it is important learners are also made aware of their duty of care whilst on an employer's premises, as well as being made aware of the duty of care an employer owes to them. Including references to health and safety during each learner's preparation will provide the opportunity to raise this, get them to think about it in their own minds and raise questions to you, and further down the line, their employer.

Health and safety should also be included within each learner's induction when they first start their placement, and this is the responsibility of the employer. The health and safety implications should mirror the duties on the job description.

Further information about the duties of care in relation to young people and the world of work, the following can be found in this section of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:

www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/hsaw.htm

Risk assessment

Before any placement commences, it is best practice to ensure the safety of each learner by checking the environment and confirming activities. The easiest way to do this is to visit in person beforehand and complete a checklist covering the following:

Placement employer details	Employer name and contact information Contact name and role within the company
Placement details	Placement title and aims Company profile Learning objectives Clothing, including protective clothing if required Interview and travel information Days and hours of work Additional specific information
Health and safety	Health and safety responsibilities and procedures Supervisor Induction
Prohibited tasks and areas	Summary of potential hazardous areas and equipment to inform the learner about
Risk assessment	Identification of the significant hazards and appropriate control measures
Employer agreement	Confirmation that Employer's Liability Insurance is in place Confirmation that the information supplied in the checklist is correct An understanding of what safeguarding and child protection means

Using a checklist will help identify questions to ask and information to forward to each learner. Such pre-placement checks should be carried out by a suitably trained and experienced member of staff or a representative of a quality assured provider. Visiting the employer is also an ideal way to build the relationship with them, get to understand their business thereby and so help to provide as supportive and effective a placement as possible.

Additional needs of the learner

It may be helpful for the employer to be aware of any individual needs that a learner may have, which could include potential risks or hazards around educational, medical, behavioural or home circumstances. You may be able to provide this information within the restrictions of the Data Protection Act and other local safeguarding children policies, but should otherwise encourage the learner to make their employer aware of any factors that may affect their placement.

This information may then be drawn upon during the pre-placement check and risk assessment before being recorded and forwarded to the learner.

Safeguarding learners on work experience

Safeguarding learners on work experience means ensuring as safe an environment as is possible. There is often confusion about whether an employer needs to complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check if they offer work experience; work experience is actually about providing a realistic flavour of the world of work whilst at the same time providing a safe and supportive environment.

The Criminal Record Bureau (CRB)

The CRB provides access to criminal record information through its Disclosure Service enabling organisations to make safer recruitment decisions (paid or voluntary) by identifying individuals who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that which involves children or vulnerable adults.

In the large majority of work experience placements, there is no requirement to conduct a CRB check on an employer's member(s) of staff who has regular access or responsibility for the learner. However, the decision will depend on an assessment of the overall potential risks posed to a young person, and will take into account any systems in place to minimise these risks:

- Young people has been identified by the school as vulnerable for educational, medical, behavioural or home circumstance reasons;
- Longer term work experience placements, where it involves regular lone working over long periods, placements located in particularly isolated environments with one-to-one working and/or placements involving a large amount of lone travel;
- Work experience placements that include a residential element.

If the teacher feels a CRB check would be appropriate, the employer may be able to arrange this or a quality assured provider will generally be able to conduct this for you, for which there may be a charge.

Positive role models

During the work experience the employer acts in a mentor capacity and therefore needs to act as an appropriate role model with due regard for appropriate conduct with learners. It is therefore important to make employers aware to:

- Act as an appropriate role model;
- Value a learner's contribution and opinions;
- Encourage them to reach their desired goals; and,
- Listen to the learner(s) and discuss relevant topics.

Common sense approach

It is also important that work experience supervisors are not put in a vulnerable position, so it is suggested that where possible, employers are made aware that all liaison with learners should:

- Take place in an open space, with other people present where possible;
- Be within appropriate working hours where possible; and,
- Consider if questions asked about personal or family life are of an appropriate nature.

Disclosure from a learner

If an employer does have concerns about the protection of a young person they are working with (for example something the learner has said), appropriate procedures should be followed and in the first instance they may contact you as the school/college contact person.

Insurance

An employer's existing Employer's Liability Insurance will usually cover learners on work experience. However it is down to you as the work experience placement organiser to ensure this is the case beforehand. The same goes for company vehicle insurance if a learner will be travelling in a company vehicle.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) provides further guidance on this area:

www.richmond.gov.uk/guidance_from_the_association_of_british_insurers.pdf

Confidentiality

Learners on work experience placements should be made aware there maybe be aspects of their role, or aspects of their work environment, for which confidentiality is required. Employers are asked to outline any specific issues of this nature during their induction, and the same rules may apply to any visiting members of teaching staff whilst a learner is on placement.

Successful work experience outcomes

Agree aims and outcomes

A period of work experience specifically aimed at supporting a learner's studies in school/college is more beneficial if specific aims and outcomes are identified before the placement commences. Best practice includes discussing and agreeing what this means with the learners.

Aims

The aims are what the learner wants to achieve by the end of the work experience placement. When deciding this, the learner should consider what they need to achieve in relation to the qualification(s) they are studying and their own personal development. By the end of the work experience, the learners will ideally be more aware about employment opportunities in that industry/type of employer, more confident about being in the workplace, and will have built up a portfolio of evidence to continue their learning back in school/college upon their return from work experience.

Outcomes

The outcomes for work experience, ideally SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) based, are the changes that the learner wants to benefit from following a period of work experience. This could be an improvement in an individual's skills, knowledge, confidence or ability.

The example on the following page is of a work experience placement with a childcare provider to support the Cambridge Tec in Health and Social Care Level 2.

Example is of a work experience placement with a childcare provider to support the Cambridge Tec in Health and Social Care Level 2.

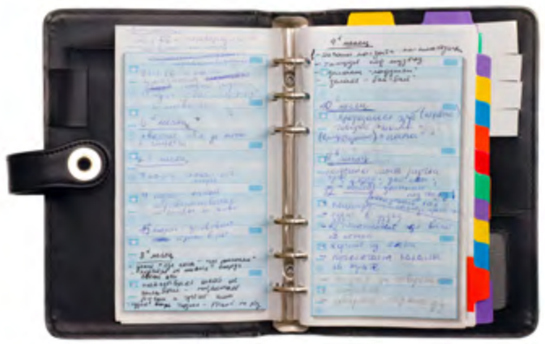
Aim	To establish a greater understanding of policies and practice in the childcare industry		
Outcomes (SMART)	By the end of the work experience period to:		
	demonstrate an improved knowledge of the policies in place to support the learning and development of children attending childcare facilities.	be able to identify increased confidence working with people in a professional environment leading to improved communication and interpersonal skills.	be more aware of the job opportunities available within the childcare industry relating to qualifications achieved.
Activities	complete a period of work experience with a childcare employer, working with children of different ages and abilities.	complete a project during the work experience period to identify the statutory guidance childcare providers have to adhere to care for children and employ staff.	shadow a range of staff within the childcare employer who are responsible for different areas of the business.
Evidence	Feedback from the employer at the end of the work experience period on performance during the placement.		
	Completed project signed off by the employer with feedback for further study.		
	Completed work experience log book to record evidence and information gathered.		
	Work experience schedule completed as outlined demonstrating a range of activities completed and a range of staff worked with.		
	Learner self-assessment completed to gauge own learning and personal development.		

Work Experience

During your discussions with learners, it is a good opportunity to explore what skills an employer is looking for in young people on work experience, as well potential new employees.

Example transferable skills valued by employers

Skills	Development of the skills
Communication skills	The ability to communicate verbally and in writing in a clear and structured manner. To include the ability to listen and question during a conversation.
Teamwork	Negotiating and working with others towards a common goal. To include negotiation and reflecting skills by demonstrating a respect of other people as well as the ability to contribute to discussions.
Presentation skills	The ability to present information in a clear and succinct manner, using appropriate tools and props to aid the presentation.
Using own initiative	The ability to work independently and take responsibility for a piece of work or a problem.
Negotiation skills	The ability to influence others and negotiate a win win outcome.
Business and customer awareness	Understanding the key drivers of business success which include financial awareness, understanding customer needs, innovation, developing customer loyalty and understanding what it means to be enterprising.
Problem solving	Looking at the 'bigger picture' to analyse the facts and develop solutions by 'thinking out of the box'. Demonstrates a positive attitude and approach to problems.
Numerical skills	General financial and mathematical awareness appropriate to the business world.
IT	The ability to use IT to work smarter and professionally. Use of the internet, e-mails, databases, general word processing and spread sheets.
Following instructions	Adhering to instructions and listening to the advice of others to a successful conclusion.
Self-management	Willingness to accept responsibility, demonstrate flexibility, time management, assertiveness and able to be a reflective learner.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths



Tips to help plan the placement

Pre-placement interview

Learners and employers should be encouraged to arrange a pre-placement interview to provide a practice opportunity for the learner and an opportunity to discuss the aims for the placement. If a face-to-face interview is not possible, a telephone conversation will suffice.

Either way, learners are encouraged to really consider what it is they want to achieve whilst on placement and this is their responsibility. Having the opportunity for a dry run journey to the placement before the interview or the Monday morning start will obviously help them to prepare and familiarise themselves with the arrangements and location.

Work experience schedule

An agreed schedule of work discussed with the learner beforehand will outline and provide a record of what the learner will be doing and who they will be working with. This will also provide you with details about what will be covered during their time with the employer, which will help you to follow up on their learning afterwards.

Induction

As with any new member of staff, providing an induction to cover emergency and evacuation procedures should be standard practice and employers are asked to ensure this is covered off. It should include relevant aspects of the company's employment policies and procedures for the company relevant to the learner whilst with the employer, along with appropriate risk assessments. Combined, these show the learner the duty of care for a safe working environment.

The employer should ask for contact details of the learner (a parent or guardian for example) should they need to make contact whilst the learner is with them. They should also share your contact details.

The induction should include a tour of the premises, showing key facilities and where personnel are based, all of which will help welcome the learner and put them at ease. Introductions to their supervisor(s) and a place to call their own (for example a desk or locker) will also help them to settle in.

Publicity

Publicising successes of work experience within your school and in the local media is an excellent way to promote how work experience can support the teaching of your subject. Sharing outcomes and feedback will promote the benefits to others in your school/college and encourage future employers to get involved.

Monitoring

Monitoring how the placement is going can be done in person (by prior arrangement) or via the telephone. It will help to keep you in the loop with how your learner is getting on. The large majority of placements go very well for everyone concerned. However, as with actual employment, there are times when things may not go well despite the best plans being made. If you are contacted by the learner or the employer because they have a concern, through discussions you should manage the situation to a mutual and successful conclusion.

Making it easy for future work experience

If this is your first venture into work experience, planning well now will help provide a solid basis for future successful placements. Learn from feedback received and keep accurate records to help you adapt your future practice.

Learning and evaluating

Debrief

Once the placement has finished and the learner will be back in school/college, set aside some time to properly evaluate the learning outcomes. Having a debrief scheduled during their first week back will help capture each learner's thoughts and feelings more accurately. Encourage them to share their learning with other learners and identify links to support their studies in the future.

On some occasions the placement may not have been what the learner expected but this is not always detrimental. For example, although a learner may discover they may not want to work in that type of employment in the future, this should still be seen as a positive because they are now more aware of different types of jobs and employment opportunities. There will also be plenty of transferrable skills and insights the learner will have picked up, whatever the environment in which they worked.

It is also a common courtesy for each employer to be personally thanked by each learner after volunteering their time and offering access to their company. Benefits to the curriculum should not be forgotten and acknowledging goodwill will hopefully encourage future support.

Recording the learning

It is useful to provide learners with a medium t their learning, provide opportunities and sugg to link the learning from work experience bac their course. A diary or other means of recordi experience could be useful.

Evaluation

An evaluation form asking for feedback on the proces as well as linking back to each original learner's anticipated aims and outcomes will provide a formal way to evaluate the benefits for each learner. Reviewing these collectively will also provide evidence on how work experience has helped teach your course and what future benefits may also be gained.

Feedback from the employer on how the learner worked will provide a personal reference which the learner can use for future work experience or job opportunities.

Final thoughts

Above all, celebrate what has been achieved during the work experience. The new contacts you may have made to support teaching of your course, the evidence your learners gained from their placements and how they are better equipped for the working world once they leave you.

BEST PRACTICE FOR LEARNERS

Getting involved in work experience

Introduction

Work experience is the best opportunity for you to learn more about the world of work, employment opportunities and to identify ways to support your continued learning. It is your work experience placement and therefore it is important that you consider what type of environment you would like to work in. Think about what you enjoy doing, what your strengths are and take into account past work experience which may influence your thoughts about this particular placement. You also need to consider how you will travel to your work experience placement and if you will need the help of others.

You may well have completed a work experience placement already or have a part time job. If this is the case, use this experience to help you consider how a work experience placement to support your current course will benefit you.

This guide provides some important information for you to consider, as well as an outline of the processes involved, so you are more aware of what needs to be completed by you, your potential work experience employer and your teacher.

At the end of the day, it is your work experience placement and your needs are at the centre of it, so bear this in mind when you are being asked to submit information by a deadline.

Benefits

For learners, work experience provides a number of benefits, including:

- Opportunities to develop key employability skills with an employer;
- Enhances the vocational curriculum by providing direct links with relevant employers;
- Providing an opportunity to develop links to potential employers and supporting career choices; and,
- Giving you an edge over other young people entering the job market.

Overall, work experience provides you with the opportunity to bring your course alive by directly linking to employers in that industry.

Finding a work experience placement

There are a number of ways to source and secure a work experience placement. Firstly, your school/college may be sourcing placements directly and will take into account your needs and those of employers offering the placements.

Secondly, your school/college may buy in the services of another provider to organise this on your behalf and their behalf. If this is the case, you may have had an interview and/or completed an application form to mirror real job searching. A number of placements will be sourced and then matched to meet your criteria. These placements will often be sourced from a large database of supportive employers who are used to supporting similar work experience needs. Use this experience to help you prepare for going on work experience, as well as for your CV.

Finally, think about family and friends and possible networking opportunities which could lead to a work experience placement to support your studies. Even though you may know the contact very well, it is important to remember that you are approaching them to gain professional experience to support your course and future employment. It is therefore a good idea to make the approach in a professional manner because it may have to be forwarded to someone else within the company who may not know you.

Planning for a successful placement

Allow sufficient time to plan

It is important to work closely with your school/college and adhere to deadlines for information needed from you, be it to complete an application form, attend an interview or prepare a CV. Planning in advance and working together will help to ensure nothing is left to the last minute.

Learner Preparation

Making sure that you are properly prepared before you start your placement is essential for a successful experience of the world of work. The following areas outline key things to think about and to cover with the work experience organiser in your school/college before you start. It is important to remember that first impressions count, so good preparation beforehand is vital.

Completing an application form

Always read the application form before you start. Like an exam, always make sure you answer ALL the questions you have been asked to answer and be honest with the information you provide. Check your spelling and your grammar. Example questions requiring a detailed answer may include asking for information about:

- Skills and experience developed elsewhere in your life for the work experience you may be applying for;
- Your reasons for applying; and,
- Qualifications and experience gained both within and outside of school.

Preparing a CV

A standard CV (Curriculum Vitae) for someone going on work experience should aim to be one side of A4, and certainly no more than two. Consider it as a marketing document about you, so you need to sell yourself in it. It needs to be clear, succinct and factual with accurate spelling and grammar.

The CV should be structured around the basic framework as set out below:

Personal details	Your name, address, contact telephone number and e-mail address
Personal statement	Outlining your key skills and attributes you believe describes yourself and which a potential employer would value. Examples include being an effective team player or excellent attention to detail.
Education and qualifications	Include ALL subjects and courses achieved, as well as those currently being studied. Also include courses and exams completed or studied outside of school that may be linked to a hobby, but which will demonstrate and support your personal statement.
Interests and achievements	Be short and to the point. Show your range of interests, but ensure they again demonstrate and support your personal statement and show you in a positive light. Include anything that is a little out of the ordinary or that demonstrates key skills around organising, team work, negotiating etc. Do you have experience gained from voluntary work, work experience or awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award?
Skills	For example, include languages you may be proficient in, an outline of your IT skills or anything else you feel would be relevant.
References	Normally two are sufficient, including one from your current school/college and one in a professional work capacity if available.

A CV should be accompanied by a covering letter. Always find out the name of the person you wish to send the letter and CV. The letter should outline key elements from your CV you want to raise to the recipient. OCR's skills guide on employability can help you do this; see ***www.ocr.org.uk*** to obtain the guide.

Interview practice

Before your interview, the following table offer some tips to help you be prepared:

Company research	Demonstrate you are interested in the company and know a little about what the company does, as well as its range of customers and competitors. The company website is a good starting point, as well as local papers or talking to friends and family who may have information about them.
Dress and appearance	Professional business dress is usually the accepted attire to send out a clear message that you are serious about being offered the job or work experience. Ensure you are presented in a clean and neat manner regardless of the role you may be applying for.
First impressions	They count! Smile and look pleased to be there and interested in the company and the job/work experience opportunity.
Time keeping	Do a trial run to find out where the company is and how long it will take to get there using the means of transport available to you. It is better to arrive 15 minutes early than 15 minutes late to allow you to make a good impression, relax and study the environment.
Body language	Make eye contact, offer a firm handshake, smile and appear interested in the questions. Sit upright with your hands and arms in an open position (avoid crossing your arms), look confident and relaxed.
Answering the questions	Listen carefully and ask for clarification if you are not sure. Think about how you answer, do not use jargon or slang but think about professional language that a potential employer would want to hear and which puts you in a positive light. How would you answer the following example interview questions: • What is your biggest achievement outside of school? • What do you consider to be your strengths? • How would other people describe you? • What interests you about working in this company?
Asking the questions	As well as being able to answer the interviewer's questions, it is important to have some of your own up your sleeve to indicate your interest in the position, demonstrate you have been listening and that this is an employer you may want to work for.
End of the interview	Thank the interviewer for their time, offer to shake their hand and enquire what the next steps are.
Learn from the experience	An interview is a two-way process to find out more about if you would want to work in the company as much as if the company would want you to work with them. Learn something new from the interview to put into practice next time. If the interview wasn't successful, ask for feedback so you can learn from it.

Responsibilities in the workplace

Before going into a workplace and being asked to do tasks that may be unfamiliar to you, it is a good idea to outline what responsibilities lay with you as well as the employer. This should be covered before you start or during your induction.

Travel arrangements

Consider all options available to you when it comes to travelling to a work experience placement. This will broaden the geographical area you can travel to and therefore broaden the potential work experience placements available to you.

Be realistic about your travel ambitions, especially if you are relying on a lift from a parent, relative or friend. Consider the time of day and rush hour, which may lengthen the journey. Have a back-up plan if your proposed form of transport doesn't materialise or is delayed on one of the days.

Transferable skills

These are skills which a potential employer or work experience provider looks for to demonstrate how you as a person will fit in to the job role and/or company. They can generally be developed in a variety of placement types so keep an open mind and think about which ones you are proud of and which ones need to be developed further.

Example transferable skills an employer values

Skills	Development of the skills
Communication skills	The ability to communicate verbally and in writing in a clear and structured manner. To include the ability to listen and question during a conversation.
Teamwork	Negotiating and working with others towards a common goal. To include negotiation and reflecting skills by demonstrating a respect of other people as well as the ability to contribute to discussions.
Presentation skills	The ability to present information in a clear and succinct manner, using appropriate tools and props to aid the presentation.
Using own initiative	The ability to work independently and take responsibility for a piece of work or a problem.
Negotiation skills	The ability to influence others and negotiate a win win outcome.
Business and customer awareness	Understanding what are the key drivers of business success which includes financial awareness, understanding customer needs, innovation, developing customer loyalty and understanding what it means to be enterprising.
Problem solving	Looking at the 'bigger picture' to analyse the facts and develop solutions by 'thinking out of the box'. Demonstrates a positive attitude and approach to problems.
Numerical skills	General financial and mathematical awareness appropriate to the business world.
IT	The ability to use IT to work smarter and professionally. Use of the internet, e-mails, databases, general word processing and spread sheets.
Following instructions	Adhering to instructions and listening to the advice of others to a successful conclusion.
Self-management	Willingness to accept responsibility, demonstrate flexibility, time management, assertiveness and able to be a reflective learner.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Written confirmation

It is a good idea to keep in writing everything about your work experience placement to provide a list of who you may have approached, when you need to attend an interview, as well as having a record to look back on once your placement has been completed. Investing in a folder to keep all this in one place will help organise the paperwork and help ensure nothing is mislaid. It will also provide a useful tool for future job or work experience searches.

Up to date and relevant job description

Work experience activities will reflect the type of environment you are looking to go into and take into account your age, experience and expertise. It is therefore important to consider what you are able to give to the type of role you are applying for, as well as considering what you personally want to achieve by the end of the period with an employer.

You should not be asked to undertake activities that you are not legally allowed to (for example using specialist equipment under a certain age) and you will be supervised at all times.

Before your placement you will be provided with an up to date and relevant job description outlining key tasks and activities to be completed during your time with the employer. It will also outline company details, what you may be expected to wear and hours of work.

Central point of contact

Each employer provides a single point of contact for each learner to approach in the lead up to work experience and during the week. This person may also see you for an interview and be a point of contact during your time with the employer who can provide support when needed.

You may be working with other people during the week, especially with large employers, but the central point of contact will often be your main source for information from start to finish, and your supervisor for the time you are with the employer.

Responsibilities

Health and safety

Whilst on work experience, learners have a responsibility for health and safety in just the same way an employee in that same company does. They have a duty of care towards others and must ensure their actions will not negatively impact on others.

All employers who have offered to take learners on work experience are asked to provide an induction at the start of the placement. This is an ideal opportunity to outline key health and safety responsibilities and what to do in the event of an emergency or accident.

Each work environment is different and different practices may therefore apply, so it is important that every learner feels comfortable, understands and adheres to individual safety instructions.

Further information about the duties of care in relation to young people and the world of work, the following can be found in this section of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/hsaw.htm

Risk assessment

Learners on work experience are classed as employees for health and safety purposes. This means employers owe the same duty of care to you as they would for an employee. An employer's existing workplace risk assessment may already cover the risks that you may be exposed to. However, it is an employer's duty to take account of potential risks that may arise as a result of a young person's age, relative lack of maturity or experience.

Additional needs of the learner

It is important that the employer taking you on work experience is also notified of any relevant information regarding your individual needs, which may include potential risks or hazards that may need to be considered because of specific educational, medical, behavioural or home circumstances. Your teacher may be able to share some information with your permission but you are best placed to make your employer aware of any factors that may affect your placement. Don't be afraid to be honest with your employer, it is in your interests and they are likely to be supportive.

Safeguarding learners on work experience

Whilst on work experience, those organising the placement for you need to ensure it will be a safe and supportive environment to maximise the learning potential and to keep you safe.

In the large majority of cases there is no need to formally conduct a check on employers through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) but if this is necessary, the relevant paperwork will be completed on your behalf before you start with the employer.

Whilst on work experience, employers have a duty of care to act as a positive role model and to adopt a common sense approach to ensure your time with the company is a productive and enjoyable one. If you have any questions or concerns about this either before or during your work experience, it is important to speak to the work experience organiser within your school/college.

Insurance

An employer's existing Employer's Liability Insurance will usually cover you on work experience; however it is down to you as the work experience placement organiser to ensure this is the case beforehand. The same goes for company vehicle insurance if you will be travelling in a company vehicle.

Confidentiality

As a learner on work experience with a host employer, it is important that you respect any issues of confidentiality when on an employer's premises. Employers are asked to outline specifics to you during your induction.

Due to data protection no information gathered on a work experience placement should be removed from the workplace unless permission has been authorised by your supervisor.

Successful work experience outcomes

Agree aims and outcomes

A period of work experience aimed at supporting a course in school/college is more beneficial if specific aims and outcomes are identified and discussed before the placement commences.

Aims

These are what you want to achieve by the end of the work experience placement. When deciding this, you should consider what you need to achieve in relation to the qualification(s) that you are studying and your own personal development. By the end of the work experience, you will ideally be more aware about employment opportunities in that industry/type of employer, more confident about being in the workplace, and will have built up a portfolio of evidence to continue your learning back in school/college upon their return from work experience.

Outcomes

Outcomes for work experience are the changes that you want to happen by the end of your work experience placement. They should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) based, and could be an improvement in your skills, knowledge, confidence or ability to perform specific tasks.

The example on the following page is of a work experience placement with a childcare provider to support the Cambridge Tec in Health and Social Care Level 2.

Work Experience

Example is of a work experience placement with a childcare provider to support the Cambridge Tec in Health and Social Care Level 2.

Aim	To establish a greater understanding of policies and practice in the childcare industry		
Outcomes (SMART)	By the end of the work experience period to:		
	demonstrate an improved knowledge of the policies in place to support the learning and development of children attending childcare facilities.	be able to identify increased confidence working with people in a professional environment leading to improved communication and interpersonal skills.	be more aware of the job opportunities available within the childcare industry relating to qualifications achieved.
Activities	complete a period of work experience with a childcare employer, working with children of different ages and abilities.	complete a project during the work experience period to identify the statutory guidance childcare providers have to adhere to care for children and employ staff.	shadow a range of staff within the childcare employer who are responsible for different areas of the business.
Evidence	Feedback from the employer at the end of the work experience period on performance during the placement.		
	Completed project signed off by the employer with feedback for further study.		
	Completed work experience log book to record evidence and information gathered.		
	Work experience schedule completed as outlined demonstrating a range of activities completed and a range of staff worked with.		
	Learner self-assessment completed to gauge own learning and personal development.		

Tips to help plan the placement

Pre-placement interview

It is a really good idea to attend a pre-placement interview before you start work experience. This provides excellent practice for future interviews and also provides you with an opportunity to consider what it is you want to achieve by the end of the week and have the opportunity to discuss this with your potential work experience employer. These discussions will provide an opportunity to agree activities and ask questions you may have before you start.

If you don't already know where the employer is based, it is a good idea to find this out before attending the interview. Visiting the workplace beforehand is also an opportunity for you to help visualise the location and environment, which in turn helps to alleviate the inevitable nerves you will feel on the Monday morning when you start.

If having an interview face-to-face is not possible, a conversation on the telephone beforehand can still be beneficial.

Work experience schedule

Your employer should provide you with a schedule for the placement, which takes into account what activities you would like to participate in to help achieve your outcomes. It is therefore important that you do your bit to consider what you want to achieve and so influence the schedule.

Induction

You will be treated like a new member of staff and the induction should include emergency and evacuation procedures, relevant aspects for the employment policies and procedures for the company along, with appropriate risk assessments so that you understand your duty of care for a safe working environment.

The induction will probably include a tour of the premises to show you key facilities and personnel who can help you during your placement. The induction is an opportunity for you to take it all in and settle into the role for the time you are there.

Monitoring

Your school/college may visit you whilst you are on placement. This will help to keep them in the loop and ensure that expectations are being met.

The large majority of placements go very well for everyone concerned. However, as with actual employment, there are times when things may not go to plan. Despite the best preparation, there may be circumstances which mean a key contact is not available or an activity has changed. It could be that you find out that your first experience into this type of company within the industry you are studying is not what you expected.

If you find that you have questions or are not sure about any part of your work experience, raise this with your supervisor or school/college contact as soon as possible.

Learning and evaluating

Debrief

Once the placement has finished and you have returned to school/college, set aside some time to properly evaluate the original learning outcomes you set. This debrief time will allow you to capture your thoughts and feelings, and encourage you to share your learning and identify links to support your future learning.

As a common courtesy, a letter of thanks will go a long way to demonstrating to the employer your appreciation for the time they volunteered and accessed they offered to their company.

Recording the learning

Your school/college may provide a means of recording your learning, as well as opportunities and suggestions to link the learning back to your course and future employment. Take time to complete this as fully as you can – it was your work experience and so it important you take responsibility for it.

Evaluation

An evaluation form asking for feedback on the process as well as linking back to your original aims and outcomes will provide a formal way to evaluate the benefits for you. Reviewing these collectively with others studying your course will also provide evidence on how work experience has helped to compliment the teaching of your course and what future benefits may also be gained.

Feedback from the employer on how you worked will provide a personal reference which you can use for future work experience or job opportunities. It will also provide an opportunity to update your CV with an outline of what you achieved whilst on work experience.

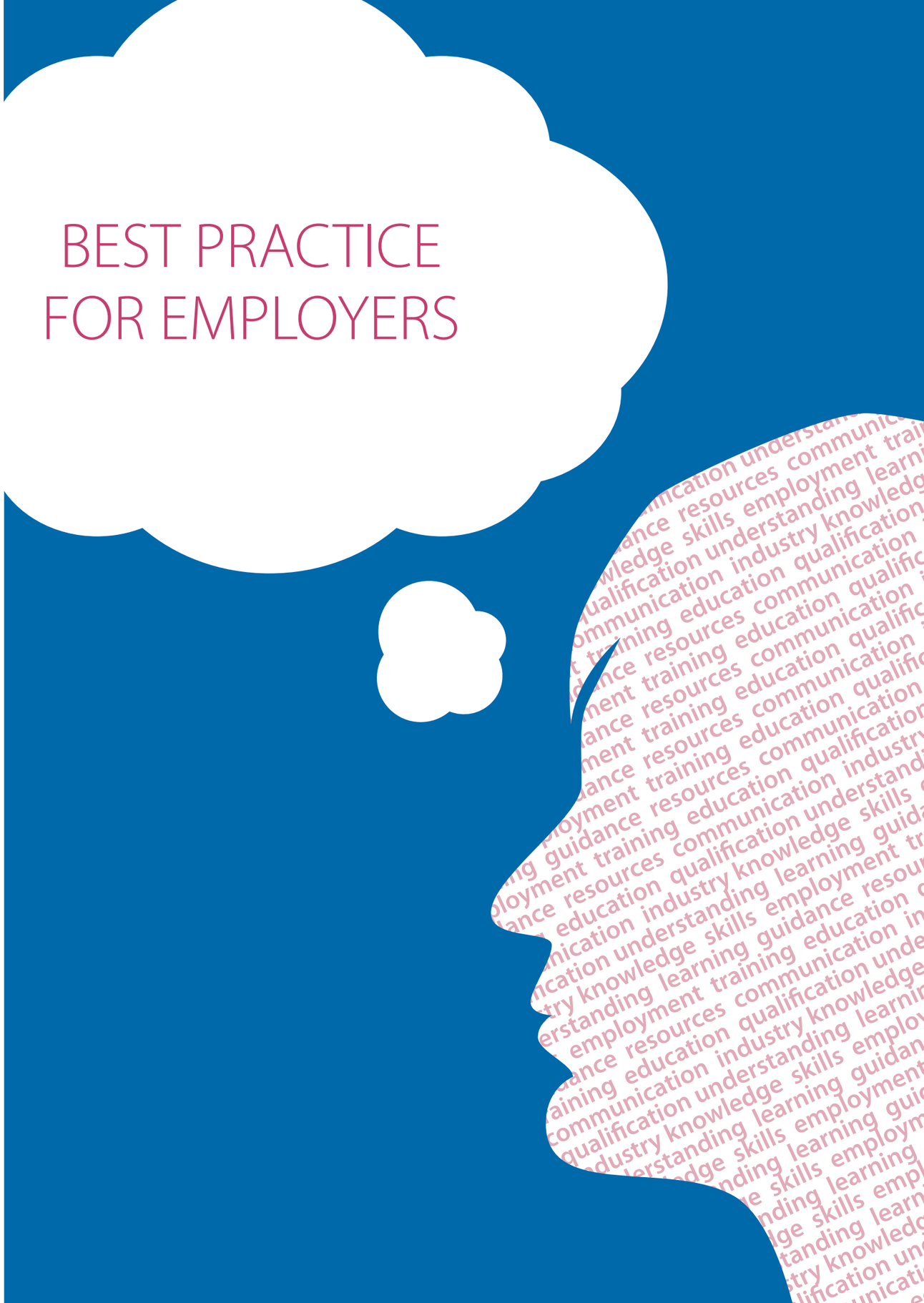
At the end of the day, it is important to make the most of the valuable opportunity work experience provides. So evaluate the whole learning process, asking yourself what did you learn, what did you enjoy, what did you find difficult and what would you like to do again?

It is also beneficial to consider if things did not go according to plan, why this was and what you can do to prevent similar happening in the future. It could be that you simply did not enjoy the type of work or the environment. Either way this is still important learning and will help you establish where you do want to work, as well as where you may not. You will also have gained some transferrable skills and useful insights that you will draw upon whenever you get that first job.

Final thoughts

Above all, celebrate what you have achieved, the new contacts you may have made and how evidence gained from your placement has supported your course, and your future employment prospects.

BEST PRACTICE FOR EMPLOYERS



Getting involved in work experience

Introduction

You may be reading this as an organisation about to offer work experience for the first time or one that provides placements on a regular basis. Either way, thank you for the support you are giving to potential future employees. The opportunities you are about to give them will be hugely beneficial.

There are a number of ways to offer learners a valuable work experience placement in your organisation. You may be approached direct by a work experience organiser in a local school/college and/or a quality assured provider registered with the Institute of Education Business Excellence (IEBE) who will follow best practice to select work experience opportunities. The details around the type of placement will be recorded and passed onto the learner prior to their placement. You may also be approached by a learner who has a link with your business via a relative or friend, or has taken an interest in your business as a potential work experience provider. This type of approach should always be followed up by the work experience organiser.

Benefits

For employers, work experience provides a wide range of benefits, including:

- Supporting the recruitment of future employees;
- Promoting personal development of staff who support the placements;
- Enhancing social responsibility by providing direct links to the local community, which in turn helps to raise an organisation's profile; and,
- Inspiring fresh ideas in your business using new pair of eyes.

Overall, work experience enables you to invest in the education of learners today to help support their future employment.

Planning for a successful placement

Allow sufficient time to prepare

Schools/colleges are advised to plan work experience programmes in order to co-ordinate what learners want to achieve and what employers are able to offer. You may be approached by a school/college directly or a quality assured provider often six months in advance to ask for a placement and an early indication of whether or not you are able to offer a placement.

Learner Preparation

Before a learner starts work experience with you, they may have already completed a period of work experience or they may have a part-time job. If this is the case, they should already be aware of what is expected of them in the workplace. However, there is still some preparation they will need to do before they start with you.

This preparation may include completing a CV and/or application form, identifying skills needed for the work place, their personal development, and their travel arrangements – whether or not they will be using public transport, or relying on relatives or friends for a lift. It is also recommended that learners are made aware of potential risks in the workplace and their associated responsibilities.

Written confirmation

It is advisable to put everything in writing so that the learner, the school/college and you all have a copy of the same paperwork to confirm the dates of the work experience placement, the location, duties and so on. This paperwork will also help each learner to record their learning and in turn to support their course.

Communicate with others in the company when you know who will be joining you for work experience and outline what they will be doing and what they hope to achieve.

Up to date and relevant job description

Before the learner commences their work experience it is important that they have a relevant job description outlining key tasks they will be expected to do during the week, minimum level of experience required and skills that will be developed.

This is also a good opportunity for the employer to think about who the learner will be working with. Learners must be supervised at all times and legal obligations adhered to. For example there will be age restrictions for the use of some specialist equipment.

Providing a brief summary about the company for the learner, as well as the company's website address will enable the learner to investigate further before they start.

Also consider about what, if any, protective clothing and/or equipment may be required and whether you are able to provide it. What hours of work would you like the learners to work and what breaks will they have during the day? Is there somewhere for them to purchase lunch (either on site or within walking distance) or should they bring a packed lunch?

All this information will help to satisfy the learner's curiosity before they visit you and help them to visualise the sort of environment they will be working in.

Central point of contact

During the week, it is helpful for the learner to have one named supervisor they can refer to should the need arise. This supervisor will ideally have met the learner for an interview first and will be on hand to communicate to colleague information about who the learner is, when they will be joining the business for work experience, and what they will be doing.

It is also advisable to have a main contact for the school/college the learner attends. Ensure that they are available for you to contact for the duration of the work experience.

As with any new employee, it is a good idea to ask the learner to complete their own contact form with details about who could be contacted in an emergency situation.

Tips to help plan the placement

Pre-placement interview

It is best practice for the employer to invite the young person for a pre-placement interview. Not only is this good opportunity to refine their interview skills, it is also a chance to discuss what they want to achieve and for you to agree outcomes for the placement.

If an interview in person is not possible, then a conversation on the telephone before the start date is strongly recommended. It will also provide the learner with the opportunity to consider what they want to achieve whilst with your company, and to help alleviate inevitable nerves before they walk through the door on that Monday morning.

Work experience schedule

Having an agreed plan for the placement will allow all activities to be scheduled beforehand and communicating this will provide notice to anyone involved, prompting questions before the placement starts. Circulating this information to company colleagues will mean everyone has access to the same information.

Induction

As with any new member of staff, providing an induction to cover emergency and evacuation procedures should be standard practice. Including relevant aspects of the company's employment policies and procedures for the company, along with appropriate risk assessments will help outline to the learner what it means to be in a safe working environment.

Asking for contact details, (of a parent or guardian for example) is also a good idea should you need to make contact during their time with you.

A tour of the premises, showing key facilities and where colleagues are based will help to welcome the learner and put them at ease. Introductions to their supervisor(s) and a place to call their own (for example a desk or locker) will also help them to settle in.

Use the induction to follow up on issues raised in the pre-placement interview, when outcomes and the associated activities were discussed. This will help to confirm arrangements for what the learner will be doing and when.

Responsibilities

Health and safety

Health and safety is everyone's responsibility. The learner should have been be made aware that whilst on work experience, they have a duty of care to themselves and other people they will be working with and the same applies for employers taking learners on work experience. An induction is an ideal opportunity to advise learners of their health and safety responsibilities and to ask for emergency contact details in the event of an accident or emergency situation.

Further information about the duties of care in relation to young people and the world of work, the following can be found in this section of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974):

http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/hsaw.htm

Risk assessment

Learners on work experience are classed as employees for health and safety purposes, which means an employer owes the employee a duty of care. Existing risk assessments you have in place, especially if prepared for employing young people under the age of 18 years, may already cover a young person on work experience.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999) place a duty on employers to complete a risk assessment for learners on work experience. This should take into account a learner's lack of experience and maturity and should record potential significant risks and relevant control measures.

If five or more people are employed, the risk assessment must be in writing. It need not be complicated or lengthy but must demonstrate an awareness of the potential risks employees may be exposed to and how the risks can be ideally eliminated or at the very least reduced.

The school/college (or quality assured provider) may still want to arrange an informal visit beforehand to confirm the environment is a safe and suitable place of work for a young person. This provides you with an opportunity to ask more about the placement itself and the young person concerned.

A standard form is often used by the work experience organiser to record all information including duties, hours of work and supervision information. If stored electronically, this information may be provided for each subsequent learner, negating the need for regular follow-up assessments unless there are significant changes.

Additional needs of the learner

It may be helpful for you to be aware of any individual needs that a learner may have, which could include potential risks or hazards around educational, medical, behavioural or home circumstances. The teacher or work experience co-ordinator may be able to provide this information within the restrictions of the Data Protection Act and other local safeguarding children policies, but should otherwise encourage the learner to make you aware of any factors that may affect their placement.

This information may then be drawn upon during the pre-placement check and risk assessment before being recorded and forwarded to the learner.

Safeguarding learners on work experience

Safeguarding learners on work experience means ensuring as safe and supportive an environment as is possible.

The Criminal Record Bureau (CRB)

The CRB provides access to criminal record information through its Disclosure Service, enabling organisations to make safer recruitment decisions (paid or voluntary) by identifying individuals who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that which involves children or vulnerable adults.

In the large majority of work experience placements, there is no requirement to conduct a CRB check on an employer's member(s) of staff who have regular access or responsibility for the learner. However, the final

decision will depend on an assessment of the overall potential risks posed to a young person, taking into account any systems in place to minimise these risks:

- Young people has been identified by the school as vulnerable for educational, medical, behavioural or home circumstance reasons;
- Longer term work experience placements, where it involves regular lone working over long periods, placements located in particularly isolated environments with one-to-one working and/or placements involving a large amount of lone travel;
- Work experience placements that include a residential element.

If after having read this, you feel a CRB check would be appropriate, you may be able to arrange this yourself or a quality assured provider will generally be able to conduct this for you, for which there may be a charge.

Positive Role Models

The employer acts in a mentor capacity during the work experience, and therefore needs to act due regard for appropriate conduct with learners. It is therefore important to:

- Act as an appropriate role model;
- Value a learner's contribution and opinions;
- Encourage them to reach their desired goals; and,
- Listen to the learner(s) and discuss relevant topics.

Common sense approach

It is important that work experience supervisors are not put in a vulnerable position, so it is advisable that where possible, all liaison with learners should:

- Take place in an open space, with other people present where possible;
- Be within appropriate hours; and,
- Consider if questions about personal or family life are of an appropriate nature.

Disclosure from a learner

If you do have concerns about the protection of a learner that you are working with (for example, something they have said), appropriate procedures should be followed.

Seek advice from the school/college or quality assured provider in the first instance.

Insurance

An employer's existing Liability Insurance will usually cover learners on work experience. However it is down to you as the work experience placement provider to ensure this is the case beforehand. The same goes for company vehicle insurance if a learner will be travelling in a company vehicle.

Insurance will need to cover the following potential occurrences:

- Injury to the learners themselves;
- Injury to others (including members of the public, customers and employees) on the premises;
- Injury to others (including members of the public, customers and employees) when not on the premises; and,
- Damage to property.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) provides further guidance on this area:

www.richmond.gov.uk/guidance_from_the_association_of_british_insurers.pdf

Confidentiality

During the induction, learners should be informed that whilst on work experience they may see or hear things of a confidential nature and should be advised of the level of trust that is placed in them not to disclose such information.

Learners may also have access to IT and the internet which although may be restricted. Learners should still be made aware of the boundaries within which they can operate.

Appropriate policies and procedures may also help a learner understand the boundaries they must operate within, coupled with close supervision. It is best to advise the learner of these during the induction.

Successful work experience outcomes

Agree aims and outcomes

A period of work experience specifically aimed at supporting a learner's course in school/college is more beneficial if aims and outcomes are identified before the placement commences. Best practice is to discuss and agree these beforehand.

Aims

These are what the learner wants to achieve by the end of the work experience placement. The learner should consider what they need to achieve in relation to the qualification(s) that they are studying and their own personal development. By the end of the work experience, they will ideally be more aware about employment opportunities in that industry/type of employer, more confident about being in the workplace, and will have built up a portfolio of evidence to continue their learning back in school/college upon their return from work experience.

Outcomes

Outcomes for work experience are the changes that the learner wants to happen by the end of their work experience placement. They should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) based, and could be an improvement in skills, knowledge, confidence or ability to perform specific tasks.

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Aim	To establish a greater understanding of policies and practice in the childcare industry		
Outcomes (SMART)	By the end of the work experience period to:		
	demonstrate an improved knowledge of the policies in place to support the learning and development of children attending childcare facilities.	be able to identify increased confidence working with people in a professional environment leading to improved communication and interpersonal skills.	be more aware of the job opportunities available within the childcare industry relating to qualifications achieved.
Activities	complete a period of work experience with a childcare employer, working with children of different ages and abilities.	complete a project during the work experience period to identify the statutory guidance childcare providers have to adhere to care for children and employ staff.	shadow a range of staff within the childcare employer who are responsible for different areas of the business.
Evidence	Feedback from the employer at the end of the work experience period on performance during the placement.		
	Completed project signed off by the employer with feedback for further study.		
	Completed work experience log book to record evidence and information gathered.		
	Work experience schedule completed as outlined demonstrating a range of activities completed and a range of staff worked with.		
	Learner self-assessment completed to gauge own learning and personal development.		

During your discussions with learners on placement, it is a good opportunity to raise what skills an employer is looking for in young people on work experience as well potential employees. The following is a list outlining some areas that could be discussed: .

Example transferable skills valued by employers

Skills	Development of the skills
Communication skills	The ability to communicate verbally and in writing in a clear and structured manner. To include the ability to listen and question during a conversation.
Teamwork	Negotiating and working with others towards a common goal. To include negotiation and reflecting skills by demonstrating a respect of other people as well as the ability to contribute to discussions.
Presentation skills	The ability to present information in a clear and succinct manner, using appropriate tools and props to aid the presentation.
Using own initiative	The ability to work independently and take responsibility for a piece of work or a problem.
Negotiation skills	The ability to influence others and negotiate a win win outcome.
Business and customer awareness	Understanding the key drivers of business success which include financial awareness, understanding customer needs, innovation, developing customer loyalty and understanding what it means to be enterprising.
Problem solving	Looking at the 'bigger picture' to analyse the facts and develop solutions by 'thinking out of the box'. Demonstrates a positive attitude and approach to problems.
Numerical skills	General financial and mathematical awareness appropriate to the business world.
IT	The ability to use IT to work smarter and professionally. Use of the internet, e-mails, databases, general word processing and spread sheets.
Following instructions	Adhering to instructions and listening to the advice of others to a successful conclusion.
Self-management	Willingness to accept responsibility, demonstrate flexibility, time management, assertiveness and able to be a reflective learner.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Publicity

It is important to promote the work experience programme within your organisation. Include as much information as possible about the learner(s) and what they will be doing. Sharing outcomes and feedback at the end of the placement with colleagues across the company, in your newsletters and publications, and in the local/national press will help to maintain your profile as an investor in young people, help secure future opportunities, and encourage other employers to get involved.

Monitoring

You may receive a visit or a telephone call from the learner's school/college contact to check how the placement is going. Providing a summary of progress to date will help them in the formal review that will take place when the learner returns to school/college.

A planned and well-managed placement will go a long way to ensure its success and reduce the possibility of anything going wrong. If however, things don't quite go to plan it is important to discuss these with the learner in the first instance. A follow up with their school/college (or quality assured provider if involved) will help to manage to a mutually beneficial conclusion.

Making it easy for future work experience

Planning well for the first placement will provide an excellent basis for future opportunities by allowing you to replicate many elements of the process. Gathering and using feedback from the learner, school/college (and if used, a quality assured provider) will help to improve your future practice.

Learning and evaluating

Recording the learning

At the end of the placement, arrange an exit interview or debrief with the learner. This will provide an opportunity for you both to discuss lessons learned and record the value of their time spent with you. Personal feedback about how they performed can provide a reference for a future work experience or job interview.

Once back in school/college, the learner will also formally evaluate their own learning, as well as have the opportunity to share their thoughts, observations and experiences with others they study with. This will provide a truly holistic picture to the work experience placement by linking back to the qualification(s) that they are studying and to their employment opportunities after they leave education.

Final thoughts

If this was your first venture into work experience, think about what went well and what could be improved for the future. Above all, think about improvements that could be made and assess feedback received from colleagues in your organisation, as well as the work experience organisers and the learners themselves.

Celebrate your contribution to not only a young person's learning, but also to their personal development and their preparation for work. Anyone who went on work experience will usually remember their placement, who they worked with, what they did, and what impression this particular experience of the world of work left on them. Being part of influencing a young person's view on the world outside of education is both exciting and a privilege. Above all, work experience would not be possible without the goodwill of employers like you to make it happen, so thank you.

SUBJECT SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Introduction

This section examines work experience in three subject areas: Business & Administration, Health and Social Care and IT.

With backgrounds to each sector and relevant case studies, it provides best practice for teachers, young people and businesses offering work experience placements in these sectors.

Each of the case study scenarios follows the story behind at least one teacher, learner and employer.

Business & Administration

Introduction

Because of its important role at the heart of the economy, business and administration is a popular subject for young people to study. The subject is wide-ranging, covering a range of business scenarios, from financial forecasting to customer relations to business ethics, amongst many others.

Business and administration is about getting practices and processes right and these are important concerns for all employers, large or small, in all sectors and industries. It is for these reasons that work experience placements in a business and administration environment provide excellent learning opportunities for young people.

A teacher, student and employer share how they have benefitted from work experience in this sector.

A Teacher's View

Ruth Turner , Langley Academy

We closely follow the route to employment possibilities for all our students, so taking part in work experience locally is very valuable. The process of interviewing students, nurturing them with skills to prepare them for the workplace, offering them a selection of opportunities, visiting the student at their work experience placement and follow up is very important to the each student's learning and development. It is something we are unable to offer in school because it needs to be done through a real work environment. Ali (see Learner's view below) returned from work experience more motivated to learn and study, and to achieve the skills required to forge the career Ali wanted. We are so very grateful to all the employers we work with for continuing to offer young people these fantastic opportunities.

A Learner's View

Ali Amina, Langley Academy

Signarama supported my learning by providing me with an insight into B2B and how it works. As I am studying Business at school, knowing about various different business transactions and relationships makes it easier for me to relate to different topics in my subject, which improves the way I learn.

After my placement at Signarama my goals became clearer and focused. I got a lot of advice from both managers and other employees at the business. I also shared with them my business venture, which they gave me advice for, which helped me develop what I need to do to achieve it.

I had identified specific outcomes before I started my work experience placement, one of which was around the practical side of advertising. I was able to learn at first hand how they make various signs and advertising elements for their customers. This has made me more aware of how advertising really works, and I know find myself trying to predict how different signs were made when I see them! These practical skills I gained whilst at Signarama are going to really useful for me in the future.

Having been on work experience, I was really pleased how my understanding of the world of business improved. The areas we learn about at school really do happen and having the opportunity to talk about all aspects of their business at Signarama was a huge benefit. I was also really pleased with how my editing and Photoshop skills progressed. Once back at Langley Academy, these improvements really supported my learning because I had the chance to discuss my new found skills with others. I was also able to use these editing skills and tricks to help with my Media A Level coursework, which meant I was able to produce a much more professional piece of work.

I was expecting to do more basic tasks and learn how Signarama operated, but I didn't expect to gain so much advice from everyone at the company. Overall, Signarama gave me the motivation to realise my ultimate goal, which is to be the boss and not just an employee!

An Employer's View

Sunil Kapoor, Signarama

We find it hugely beneficial to give young people work experience placements. It affords Signarama an excellent chance to support young people in education and seek out future talent.

Because we don't have large Human Resources department, using a local quality assured provider like East Berks EBP makes the process easy and straightforward, and we would happily continue this year on year. We hope we can engage as many young people as possible to be enthusiastic about work and their future ahead.

Overall, it is a privilege to be involved and the staff absolutely love taking part. At the end of their work experience, the young people are given a thank you gift and they can create something for themselves to take away. Some of the young people have even dropped in after school to see how it is going, which we really appreciate.

Health and Social Care

Introduction

The health and care of the nation is an important issue and at some point in our lives, we all take advantage of the skills, care and expertise found in the Health & Social Care sector. For many who work in it a career in Health and Social Care is not a career but often a vocation.

Along with superb technical knowledge, the vast majority of roles found within the sector require excellent communications and people skills, along with the ability to use discretion and judgement when dealing with sensitive and confidential information. Combined, these factors means the sector provides an excellent environment in which to have work experience placements for young people and to put their learning into practice.

A teacher, students and an employer share how they have benefitted from work experience in this sector.

A Teacher's View

Janet Bowen, Baylis Court School

Having learners participate in a work experience placement as part of the Health and Social Care course enabled them to put theory into practice. It improves their confidence and develops their awareness of the health and social care profession no end.

Using the East Berkshire EBP - our local quality assured provider - provides an excellent way to allocate appropriate places for the learners and gives us access to clear guidelines for them to follow.

Work experience increases the learners' motivation by seeing the 'full picture' as it were, making them feel more grown up and their time out of school feel like real work. The difference on their return to school is immense and certainly worth the investment in it.

A Learner's View

Group report from Year 12 learners, Baylis Court School

We each attended a work experience placement to support our Health and Social Care course, which lasted a week. Each of us had already undertaken work experience in Year 10, which was a week with an employer of our choice based on our areas of interest. This helped us to prepare a little bit more for this more course specific placement; it took away a bit of the apprehension we all felt before joining our respective employers but in some ways we felt a it more apprehensive because this felt more like a proper job because we were viewed as having some knowledge of the subject area!

Our employers ranged from a dental practice, a physiotherapist, a residential care home, a childcare nursery to a dietician, a real variety of employers. On our return to school we were share our experiences, swap stories and compare notes to support different parts of our course.

Between us we concluded that the two main benefits from the week for us were a definite increase in our levels of confidence (being able to demonstrate our learning in practice was so valuable to support our course back in school) and our independence (we felt we were treated like adults and viewed as employees not just people still at school).

The information each of us gained from our placements has definitely helped us with our coursework and brings to life the course we are studying.

After the week, most of us had the opportunity to continue to visit the employer on a voluntary basis. Not only does this provide continued work experience, it is also good to keep in touch with employers who know us and may be able to provide continued support once we have completed our studies at school. And because we are continuing experience it adds value to our CVs.

To conclude, we all agree that even though we had been on work experience in Year 10 this was not **what** any of us expected….it was so much better! We all worked in friendly environments, with people who genuinely wanted to help us and were interested in what we were studying.

An Employer's View

Victoria Holt, The Oakbridge Centre

(Centre for vulnerable adults with learning difficulties)

The Oakbridge Centre believes in the power of work experience to deliver important benefits to young people. For us, it is an ideal way to educate them about the care required for those with learning difficulties, and to see their skills and abilities, not just their disabilities. It works for our vulnerable adults too. Very often the people for who we provide services are socially isolated from their community, so they benefit by having the opportunity to talk to the young people who join us for work experience. We have found that many communications barriers experienced by our service users are often reduced by this type of interaction.

We believe in the benefits of promoting social care as a career to young people is vital to motivate others to want to study and learn more. This is why we get involved in work experience and we will continue to take other young people in the future. It is important that they want to be here for the right reasons. Having the opportunity to interview them first helps to protect the vulnerable adults in our care, as well as providing good practice for the young people prior to gaining an insight into the social care industry.

An Employer's View

Sheila Gallo, Gurney House Residential Home for the Elderly

(Residential care for elderly people)

We thoroughly enjoy participating in the work experience programme locally, and having the opportunity to work with delightful young people wanting to join the health and social care industry. We benefit because many of the young people come back as volunteers and then often as bank care assistants whilst they continue their education. Over the last five years we have had medical students who completed work experience with us, worked as bank staff and then went on to become doctors – it is fantastic to have been part of this progression!

We have participated for many years and our company encourages us to involve local schools to provide young people with an insight into care and social work and maybe help them to choose it as a future career. We will therefore continue to take students because we see this as a way to help them with improving their social skills and opening their eyes to the opportunities with employers like us. Investment in this way will help us secure our future workforce.

On occasions young people we have taken on for work experience had have low opinions of themselves, but through interactions, praise, and acknowledgement of their successes from staff and clients, work experience has helped them to build up their confidence and motivation.

IT

Introduction

Information Technology plays a vital role in the modern role. From when we get up in the morning to when we go to bed, IT is all around us, facilitating our learning, our work, our leisure time.

IT is one sector where growth and development occurs very quickly and because of this, what is learnt by young people at the start of a course may be already out of date by the end of it; shifts in technology mean that something not possible yesterday will be possible tomorrow. Recruiting for the IT industry is therefore highly competitive and it is important employers get the right people with the right skills to create and apply technological advances on not only a national, but globally.

The IT industry provides a tremendous range of dynamic exciting environments for work experience placements, from the smallest specialist software developer to the biggest hardware manufacturers.

An teacher, student and employer share how they have benefitted from work experience in this sector.

A Teacher's View

Sarah Dodds, Garth Hill College

The learners at Garth Hill College benefited greatly from the opportunity to participate in recent work experience. The learners enjoyed the challenge of working in busy environments where they were asked to complete tasks which would sometimes take them out of their comfort zones. Learners also felt that they were able to develop interpersonal skills such as working in a team, problem solving and using their initiative.

Learners were placed in companies which would best match their skills and needs and the company employees worked closely and attentively with learners through a range of workshops from "Updating CVs" to "Interview Practice Techniques". This high quality and thorough support helped prepare learners for their work experience placements, as well as evaluate their learning once the placement had ended. We've found that learners' motivation really increases as a result of participating in work experience because of the practical insights and confidence building that it brings them.

Work Experience

A Learner's View

Nana-Aku Kwarteng-Ampafo, Garth Hill College

I wanted to work in IT for my work experience placement, to support a course I am currently studying. I was in an office environment, which also provided me with some experience of performing office-related duties. Ultimately I would like to be a lawyer, but having had this work experience it has provided me with other skills I now appreciate are necessary to pursue my career ambitions.

My placement provided me with a fantastic view of the world of work and opened my eyes to everything that is involved in being an effective employee and colleague. Because everyone in the office worked so hard it made me want to achieve the best I can and achieve my future goals, not just when I get a job, but also about achieving well at school.

The work experience placement was much more than I expected it to be. I was treated like a real employee and a member of the team for the time I was there. Everyone was very supportive and I would recommend it to anyone.

An Employer's View

Katie Sutton, 3M

3M has supported work experience for many years and we believe taking part affords many benefits, in particular, developing leadership skills of our junior employees. We got involved in work experience not only because we wanted to develop the local talent pool and give something back to the local community. It is very important for the business to be a good corporate citizen. What's more, work experience placements means as well as having an extra pair of hands because they don't have the distraction of company e-mails that the rest of our employees have to deal with!

As example of a recent young person we offered a work experience placement to is Nana. She was enthusiastic and bubbly, had a mature outlook and good interpersonal skills. She integrated well with our employees and made friends and good contacts for the future. Nana's feedback to 3M neatly summarises why we keep supporting this excellent programme:

"I found my work experience enabling, fun and innovative."

"I was never bored and used a lot of skills, like talking to people, talking about 3M, and what they do."

"I loved my work experience, because I always had work to do, and everyone was incredibly supportive to me and made me feel welcome."

CONTACT US

Staff at the OCR Customer Contact Centre are available to take your call between 8am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

We're always delighted to answer questions and give advice.

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