

# WORK PLACEMENT TOOLKIT



# Welcome to the work placement toolkit

Work placements  
made easy

# Introduction

**If you have ever advertised for a candidate and stated 'experience necessary', have you stopped to think where they might have gained that experience?**

Young people need more opportunities to gain the experience you are looking for before entering the world of work. You can help.

**This toolkit will help with making work placements easy for your business.**

Work placements are a great opportunity to introduce young people to the reality of working life for a limited period of time.

The aim is to provide an insight into the world of work and the opportunity to learn from the experience by exposing the young person to a variety of tasks and to the culture of the work place, such as:

- **Turning up on time**
- **Experiencing the length of a 'working day'**
- **The disciplines you need to have**
- **Removing the fear factor of the unknown (what is it really like?)**
- **Meeting new people and working together**
- **Understanding what a 'customer' is and how important they are to the business**

These are things you take for granted – everyday routine, done without thinking – easy!

But for a school pupil they can be new, interesting and sometimes a bit scary.

Your involvement in offering a work placement is essential in overcoming these fears and creating a real understanding of what 'going to work' is all about.

The length of time and method of involving the young person in the workplace can vary and **different options are available** to suit varying business needs and the needs of the young person:

- **A week-long full time placement** in S3 or S4 – this is the traditional and long-established model for work placement in schools of which most people will be aware.
- Incorporating work placements into the school timetable for senior phase (S4-S6) pupils. This may be for **an afternoon or a day per week over the course of several weeks**, to suit yourself and the pupil.
- **An extended placement** where the young person works full time with the organisation for an agreed period of time e.g. eight weeks.
- **A 'bespoke' arrangement** agreed between the business and the pupil to suit all needs. This could be during the school term or in the holidays.

Whatever the size or type of your business or organisation choose the option that suits you best.



**Work experience is great  
for young people, but  
what's in it for you?**

**More than you might imagine!**

**Work placements can help employers by challenging their perceptions of young people's skills and attitudes.**

Many employers shy away from employing young people, seeing them as a 'risk' because they lack both the experience of the workplace and the job-specific skills that employers want. In reality they may be missing out on strong candidates for their workforce.

**Offering work placements can make a useful contribution to helping young people build on their career management skills as well as workforce planning for your business.**

# Work placements can help with

- **Promoting your industry or sector:** a positive early introduction to a young person can influence them to pursue a career in your sector and influence their subject and training choices, thus improving future employee quality.
- **Recruitment opportunities:** providing placements can be a way to access the local labour market and explore a young talent pipeline.
- **Staff development:** supervising, coaching or mentoring young people offers an excellent opportunity to develop employees' management skills.
- **Understanding young people:** the candidates you meet through providing placements will offer new ideas and fresh ways of thinking, reflecting the interests and needs of the next generation of staff, customers and consumers.
- **Learning what young people can give back to your business:** be prepared to have your eyes opened.
- **A more engaged workforce:** providing work placements sends a positive message to the wider workforce about the good values of your organisation.
- **Engagement in the local community:** placements provide a valuable means of creating a positive image of your business through real connections with the local community and supporting other PR efforts in your area.
- **Contribution to economic development in the local area:** by helping to tackle some of the local issues around deprivation and youth unemployment.

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“By the end of the four weeks I was sure that I was now going to be doing a job where I could use my new skills”. I had wanted to be a lawyer, then I was interested in accounting but when I spent time with one of the quantity surveyors, that really got me thinking about my future. Overall my experience at Balfour Beatty has really focused me. I wanted to be the best I can be. Now I aspire to be outstanding.”

**Chloe,**  
*Northfield Academy pupil undertook a work placement at Balfour Beatty*

# The legal stuff... easier than you think

**Contrary to popular opinion, health, safety and environmental (HSE) requirements are not a barrier to hosting work placements in your business.**

As an employer, you are already aware that it is a legal requirement for companies to risk assess their workplace for all employees, as well as having the correct insurances in place. Work placements are no different.

It is important to protect the young person but also ensure your business is covered.

In reality, this is remarkably easy.

**Did you know that your local authority has experts who will visit your premises and help you check that everything is in place, at no cost to your business?** (except perhaps a cup of coffee and a chocolate biscuit!)

It usually takes around an hour and you will have the peace of mind of knowing that you are fully compliant. Legally there are aspects of work that young people may not be able to do, but the Work Experience Unit will support you all the way through the process.

Simply contact the Work Experience Units – details on page 14

**For further information on the legal side of things, visit the Health & Safety Executive website; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/index.htm>**





*Sean,  
Oldmachar Academy pupil  
undertook a work placement at CNR*

## **CASE STUDY**

Sean from Oldmachar undertook a summer placement at CNR International for five weeks where he gained experience as an accountant. Whilst speaking about his experience at the Aberdeen Guarantees launch he explained how much he had learnt about the soft employability skills during his time with the company. At this conference the improvement in his confidence speaking to large audiences was clear to see.

# Delivering work placements

## Pointers on structuring placements

It is vital that work placements give an accurate picture of the demands of the industry or sector, including job specific skills and tasks.

It's also important to consider the existing knowledge and expectations of the young person and any needs they may have.

To help you with this, here are some elements to consider as a basis for establishing a placement;

### > The placement may be preceded by the young person:

- completing an application form
- submitting a CV
- completing an interview or informal discussion, which could be face to face or by telephone

### > Induction should include:

- Orientation
- Health & Safety information (legal obligation)
- Briefing on the company
- Assignment of Placement Supervisor
- Goal and objective setting including the pupil's goals
- Rules and regulations (timekeeping, lunches, expected behaviour etc.)
- Time management (give guidance about time for task and when to ask for help)

### > Regular feedback on pupil performance

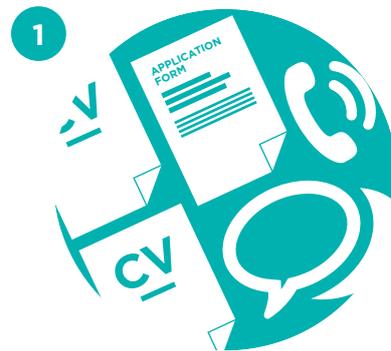
### > Teacher visit to the placement to see progress

if requested or appropriate

### > End of placement interview or pupil presentation

### > Feedback to school

## Typical placement structure



Application by the young person



Induction



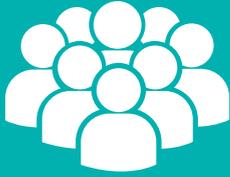
Placement



Feedback

## Example Activities:

### Applying skills learned at school to the workplace



Working as part of a team in the workplace

#### Working with others



Working with computers

#### IT Skills



Working with numbers

#### Numeracy



Listening as well as talking

#### Communication skills



Finding solutions to real life business issues

#### Problem solving



Observe company presentation and deliver one based on their placement

#### Presentation skills

### General participation in workplace activities

- Gaining an overview of what the company does and career opportunities offered
- Observing and noting different employees roles, responsibilities and behaviours
- General duties around the workplace as required
- Dealing with customers
- Attending meetings
- Administration duties
- Taking part in in-house training and development

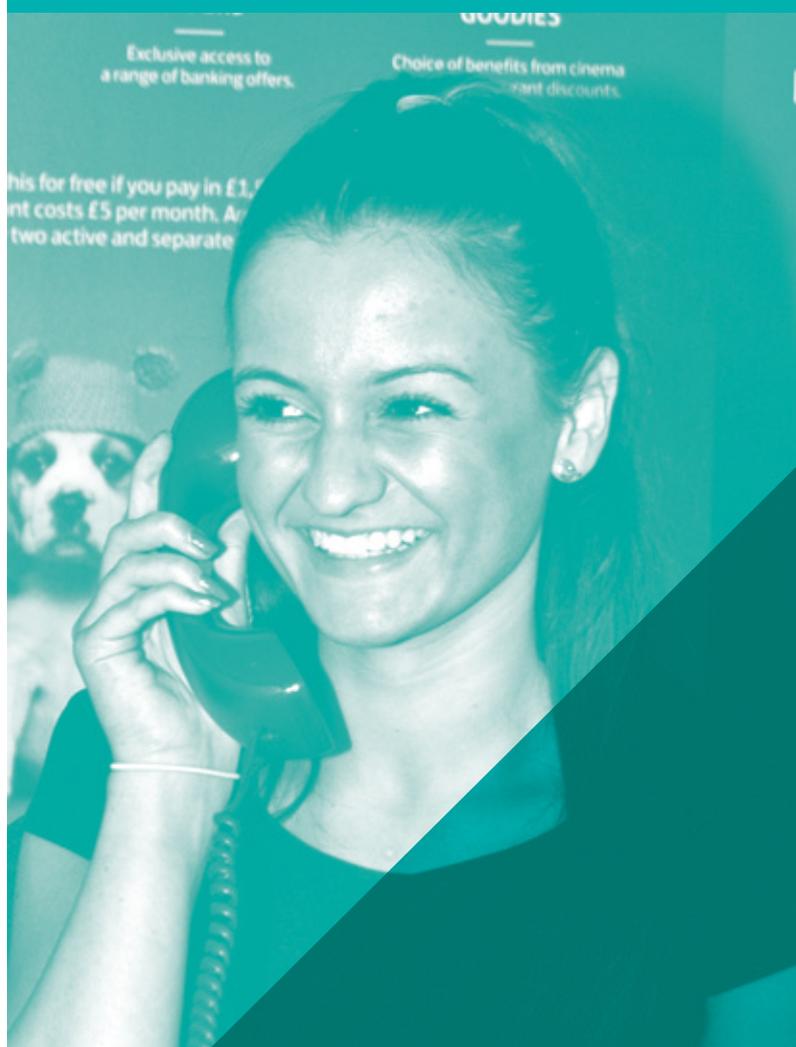
## Developing a specific piece of work or project:

- > **Identify a task or project** that the pupil could undertake
- > **Allocate a supervisor** for the pupil to shadow or take advice from
- > If appropriate the pupil can **perform a real work task** or alternatively mimic one
- > Provide the pupil with the **time and resources to complete the task or project**
- > **Review the results** with the pupil
- > **Praise if successful**
- > If necessary **provide constructive advice** about the task and hints on how to tackle similar future tasks or ways to improve
- > Remember to **include the pupil in normal workplace activities** such as meetings. It might be routine to you, but a young person can gain a lot from observing and participating.
- > **Introduce a Quality Charter** for Work Placements

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“I had a great week with Emma, she was punctual, polite, smartly dressed, very bright, mature and to be honest, she taught me a thing or two when it came to Powerpoint and Excel, so it was very much a two way learning. I really enjoyed the experience and hope to do this again.”

**Jill Clark,**  
**Childcare Director of**  
**Clockwork Nursery, Altens**





Whatever size your organisation, small or large, it is helpful to have a policy regarding work placements and to set standards. Make sure that all staff know the policy and how it affects how they work with young people doing a work placement. We have given you an example of a Quality Charter and you can use this as a starting point.

**WORK  
PLACEMENT  
QUALITY  
CHARTER**



# Work Placement Quality Charter

Work placements that work have positive outcomes for the employer, the young person and society. They are voluntary placements, but they still need to be based around some key principles to which the employer and the young person both adhere.

1. As an employer we are committed to offering **consistently high-quality work placements** in line with the latest guidance and standards.
2. The placement is **tailored to the young person's needs and circumstances**. This includes finding out what the young person wants to get out of the placement, which skills they want to develop, what barriers they face and what their career aspirations are.
3. **We clearly explain** to the young person, up front, what our expectations of them are;
  - to show an interest in the organisation and the industry and make the most of the opportunity;
  - to demonstrate a willingness to learn;
  - to respect the values of the organisation and abide by the rules.
4. The young person is introduced to **the structure of working life**; they supported in learning and developing a range of transferable skills, personal qualities and competencies which will contribute towards their employability.
5. **Expectations are managed**, the young person knows what they will contribute and how we might be able to help them for example build their CV, mentoring, references and future employment.

6. There is **clarity about the role** that the young person plays in the organisation and how they will be supported, supervised and mentored by our employees.
7. The young person is treated as an **active member of staff** but the placement is not used to fill a vacancy.
8. The young person is encouraged **to relate their existing experiences and skills to the workplace** and supported in making a more informed decision about their future. They receive open and honest feedback about what went well and what areas need to be improved and, if possible, advice on how to do this.
9. We work closely with the young person to make sure they use the placement to **find out about the different employment options** available and how to access them, including recruitment processes, and we support them in building a network of contacts.
10. Our aim is for the young person to have an **enjoyable and positive experience** of work that encourages them to become more confident in their abilities. We celebrate success.



“My work experience was with CHC Helicopter, based in Aberdeen Airport. I worked under the supervision of Avionics / Mechanical Engineers as they worked on the helicopters that carry oil workers to offshore installations in the North Sea. I worked in CHC’s “North Hangar” where I assisted the engineers who were maintaining the helicopters. I was supposed to start at seven in the morning, but I always came in fifteen to twenty minutes earlier to show I was committed and to give a good impression.

I found the whole week and experience very tiring but at the same time very informative, educational, an insight to the future and extremely enjoyable. To conclude I found my work experience illuminating and would do it all over again if given the chance. It has given me an idea of a possible career in the future.”

**Daniel,**  
**Mearns Academy pupil undertook a work placement at CHC Helicopter**





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