



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Designing successful
work experience placements:

A step-by-step guide for employers



Follow the path to a **brighter** future.

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 Search for '**Careers**' on Hwb

Contents

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What is a work experience placement?

Work experience placements provide learners with the opportunity to undertake work roles, tasks, and to use skills in a workplace setting for the benefit of the learner, the employer¹ and the school (work experience placements are sometimes referred to as 'placement[s]').

Placements can be organised in different spaces:

- Actual placements are in real spaces such as offices, factories, shops and home working spaces.
- Virtual placements are in online spaces such as websites and video-conferencing platforms.
- Hybrid placements are a combination of actual and virtual placements.

Placements can also be organised in different time periods:

- Serial placements are spread over a long period, e.g. one day a week for several weeks.
- Block placements are concentrated, e.g. for one or two weeks.

Learners can experience a range of different activities on their placements:

- Taking on a job role and practising some of the tasks and skills needed to be successful in that position.
- Shadowing employees and finding out what they do in their roles and how they contribute to the success of the organisation.
- Completing a challenge set by the employer that aligns with the needs of the business.
- Completing tasks and assignments identified

by the school that are designed to support the personal, social, educational and career development of learners.

Work experience placement programmes are managed by a wide range of organisations, including:

- Individual schools and settings (such as Pupil Referral Units).
- Local partnerships. Arrangements vary in different parts of the country but typically involves groups of schools and settings working in collaboration with local stakeholders (such as local authorities, RSPs, Careers Wales and employers). Some schemes commission local colleges and private companies to find and vet placements on behalf of the partnership.
- Employers' branded work experience placements schemes.

Placements are one example of the range of careers and work-related experiences which are beneficial to learners, schools and employers, such as:

- Visitor events, e.g. talks, discussions, 'mock' interviews.
- Workplace/ site visits.
- Business games, role plays and simulations.
- Enterprise challenges and competitions.
- Community service and volunteering.

¹ 'Employer' refers to the placement provider. 'Organisations' are enterprises that are either private (owned by individuals), or public (owned by the government) or third sector (owned charities and social enterprises).

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Getting the benefits of work experience placements.

Offering work experience placements to 14–18-year-olds is one of the most effective ways of connecting with your local schools. It is a gateway to further links such as giving talks to learners and supporting staff in delivering a relevant and up-to-date curriculum.

Work experience placements help to promote knowledge of your organisation and sector and its contribution to Welsh society and the economy. It enables you to raise awareness of your entry routes and training opportunities.

Work experience placements also provide ways of developing your staff and boosting their job satisfaction. Listening to the voice of young learners can be a creative process and a source of new ideas.



Meaningful work experience placements.

Work experience placements can have a positive impact on a learner's personal development, career planning and progress in learning. Placements might not always be successful, or what was expected, but the experience and skills learned are still valuable.

What are the benefits for a learner?

- Gaining practical experience of a workplace.
- Gaining experience to include on a CV and college/apprenticeship/job application.
- Gaining clarity on preconceptions or expectations of a job, role or industry – i.e. is it what they thought?
- Making contacts and building networks to improve employment prospects.
- Making progress in their studies.
- Equipping them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be successful in their adult career and working life.
- Developing the awareness, confidence and skills to make the transition into the next phase of education, training or employment.

they may not have considered before. If, for example, they are thinking of gaining a qualification in law, they may be surprised at the specialised areas of law, and the wide range of different careers available with a law qualification.

Learners can use a placement for networking, and gain contact or build relationships with individuals who could be a support to them in the future, e.g. offer them another placement, let them know if a job vacancy becomes available, act as a reference or answer questions about careers in the industry.

Learners can gain skills during a placement that they can later reference when making applications and attending interviews, they can use a placement as evidence of their commitment to a chosen career area or as an example of when they demonstrated certain skills. The contacts made on a placement can also be useful to a learner when they need a reference or help with finding further work experience placements or employment.

How a meaningful work experience placement can support a learner with their future career.

Preparing for a work experience placement is a great opportunity for a learner to research jobs they might like even if it is not a practical possibility to experience that job at this stage (brain surgeon for example).

A placement is a great opportunity to confirm a learner's career interests and what they are good at; but it can also open their eyes to possibilities

Work experience placements can also help a learner to gather useful information about entry routes (e.g. into apprenticeships or further and higher education) and the settings that would suit them (e.g. indoors or outdoors). They will find out more about job satisfaction (having more in the job that they like than they dislike) and job satisfactoriness (i.e. satisfying an employer with their work). It is also a way of gathering up to date information about the changing world of work and especially about what is happening in the local economy and labour market.

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Work experience placements and the Curriculum for Wales.

Work experience placements can support learners in becoming **“enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work”**. Learners can use their placements to:

- Discover more about the occupations that utilise the knowledge, skills and dispositions developed in each of the areas, e.g. how Languages, Literacy and Communication can be applied in a particular workplaces. (The [Careers Wales](#) website gives examples of jobs linked to subjects of interest).
- Understand the real-world application of processes they learn about in the different areas.
- Undertake project and coursework linked to the 4 purposes.
- Connect and apply their knowledge and skills to create ideas and products.

- Think creatively to reframe and solve problems.
- Identify and grasp opportunities.
- Take measured risks.
- Lead and play different roles in teams effectively and responsibly.
- Express ideas and emotions through different media.
- Give their energy and skills so that other people will benefit.
- Work experience placements impact on learners' adaptability, resilience, work readiness and employability.



The Four Purposes

Ambitious, capable learners, who are ready to learn throughout their lives, and who:	Enterprising, creative contributors, who willing to play a full part in life and work and who:	Ethical, informed citizens, who are ready to be citizens of Wales and who:	Healthy, confident individuals, willing to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, and who develop:
- set high standards for themselves, - enjoy challenge and solve problems, - develop knowledge and skills and apply them in different contexts, - are able to discuss their learning confidently, - are able to communicate effectively in English and Welsh, - use mathematics and numeracy and digital technologies effectively.	- think creatively, - apply their knowledge and skills to create, adapt and to solve problems, - identify and grasp opportunities, - Are confident to take risks, - lead and work together in teams, - express ideas and emotions in different ways, - use their energy and skills for the benefit of others.	- make judgments and discuss issues based on their knowledge and values, - understand and exercise their responsibilities human rights, - understand and consider the impact of their actions, - know about their culture and community, - know about society and the world in the present and past, - respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society, - see that they have a role to play to ensure the planet's sustainability.	- physical and mental health and safety, - relationships based on respect and trust, - personal values, - skills and independence to deal with everyday life, - the ability to face and overcome challenges.

Six Areas of Learning and Experience

Expressive Arts	Health and Wellbeing	Humanities	Languages, Literacy and Communication	Mathematics and Numeracy	Science and Technology
Art, Music, Dance, Drama, Film, Digital Media.	Physical health and development, mental health, emotional and social wellbeing.	Geography, history, religion, values and ethics, business studies, social studies, economics, philosophy.	Welsh, English, international languages, literature.	Five mathematical proficiencies – Conceptual understanding, Communication using symbols, Fluency, Logical reasoning and Strategic competence.	Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Design and Technology, Physics.

Cross curricular skills

Literacy	Numeracy	Digital competence
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Integral skills

Creativity and innovation	Critical thinking and problem-solving	Personal effectiveness	Planning and organising
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Cross cutting elements

Local, National and International Contexts	Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)	Human Rights	Diversity	Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE)
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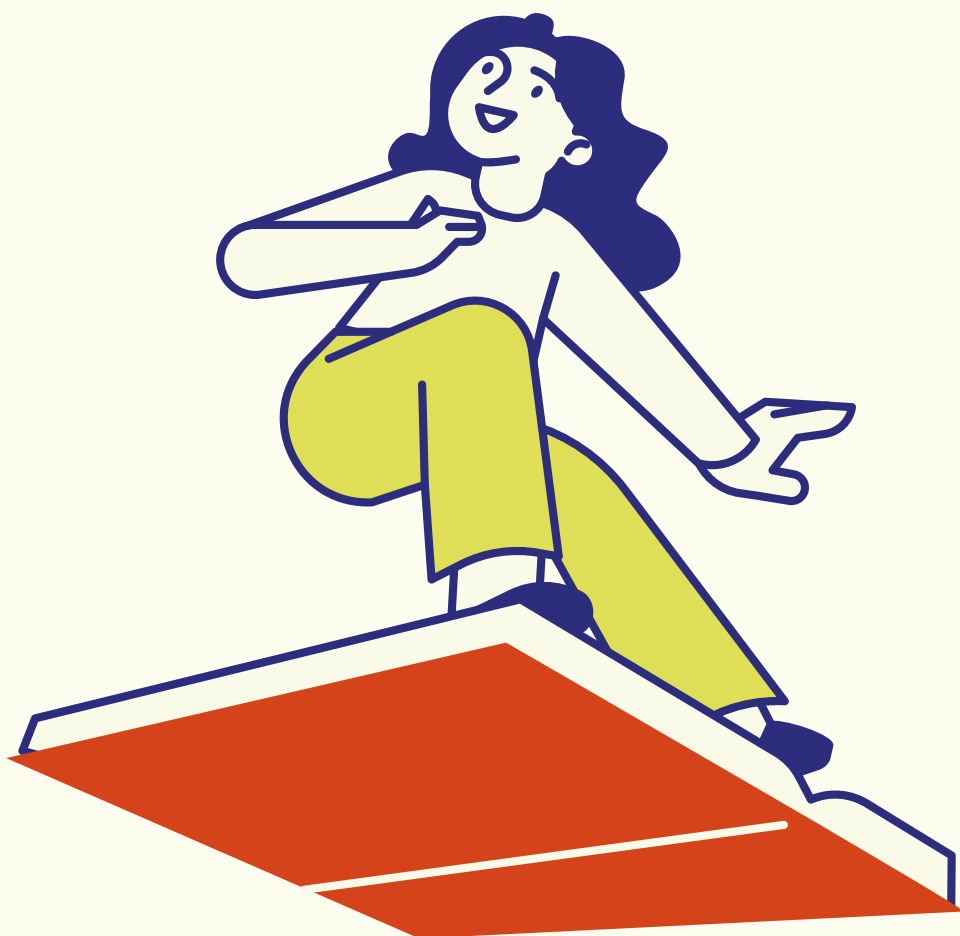
Qualifications for the 14-16 phase

New qualifications are also being developed for the 14-16 phase, including:

- Made-for-Wales GCSEs.
- VCSEs (Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education) at Levels 1 & 2 in a wide range of subjects.
- The Skills Suite at Entry Level and Levels 1 & 2 which will include a standalone Integral Skills Project qualification and a flexible range of Skills for Life and Skills for Work units that can be combined into different size qualifications. A single work experience qualification is also proposed as one of the Skills for Work units.

Work experience placements organised in collaboration with employers will enable schools to deliver these new qualifications in exciting and inspiring ways.

Further information about the new qualifications is available from [Qualifications Wales](https://www.gov.wales/qualifications-wales)



Making the most of work experience placements.

Have clear goals in mind

Successful work experience placements achieve a balance between the goals of the employer, the learner and the school. Use the table below to prioritise what is important to you and to discuss with the school and learners what they hope to achieve.

Benefits for employers

- Supporting the talent pipeline and future recruitment.
- Making a contribution to the preparation of young people for adult working life.
- Developing the skills of employees who supervise learners on their placements.
- Motivating staff, e.g. talking to young people about their roles and skills will remind them of what they contribute to the success of the business.
- Demonstrating support for the local community.
- Raising the profile of their business and sector.
- The fresh perspective that learners bring, e.g. suggesting new ideas and new ways of looking at and doing things.
- Contributing to the curriculum of schools.
- Contributing to the wider health of the economy and society in Wales.

Benefits for schools

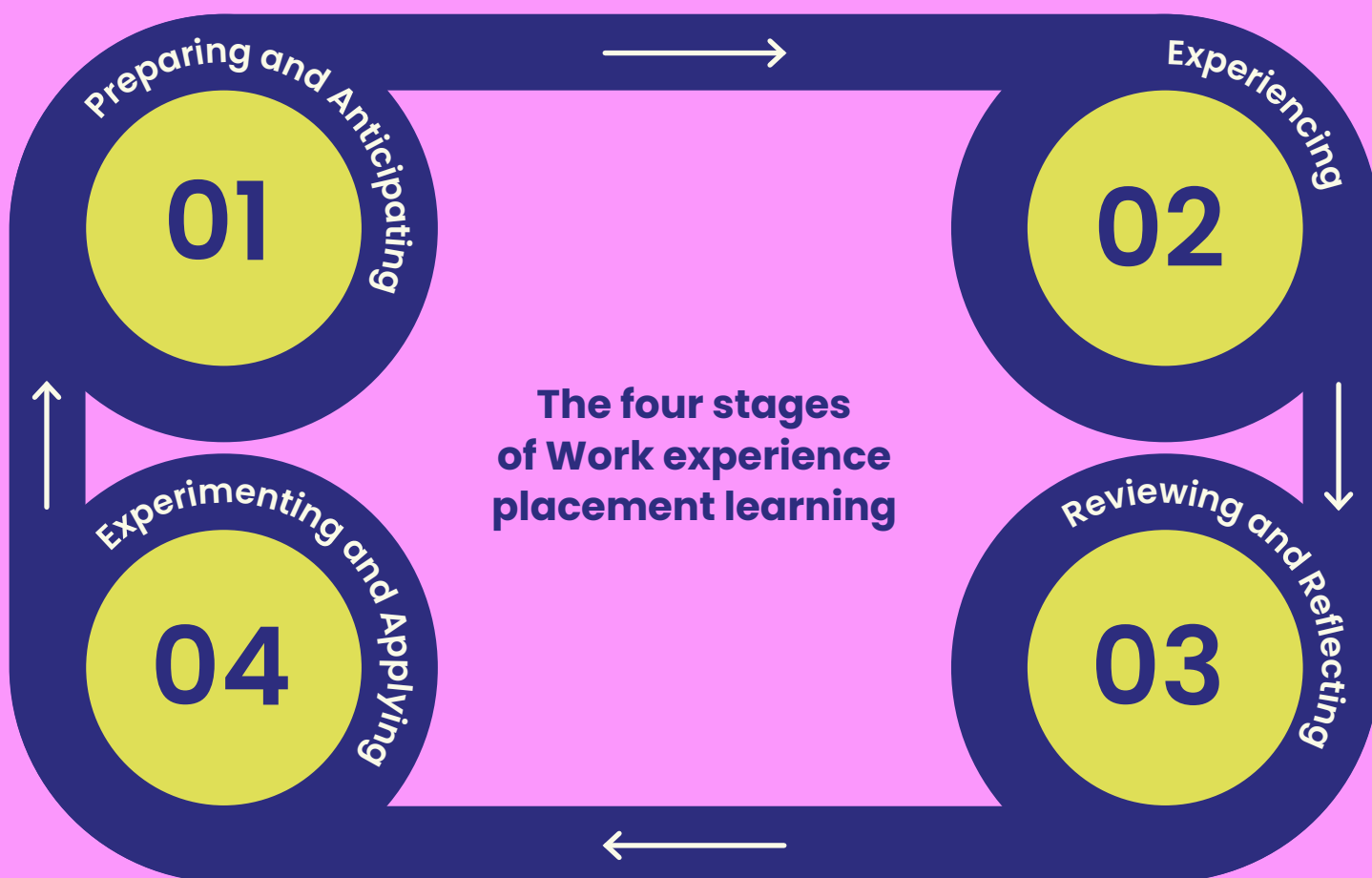
- Motivating and engaging learners to progress in their learning.
- Making a significant contribution to learners' personal and career development.
- Giving learners the opportunity to learn and apply skills in a professional environment.
- Strengthening the ties between local community partners as part of the co-construction of the curriculum.

Benefits for learners

- Developing the awareness, confidence and skills to make the transition into the next phase of their education, training or employment.
- Making contacts and building networks to improve their employment prospects.
- Equipping them with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to be successful in their adult careers and working lives.
- Making progress in their learning.
- Gaining practical experience of a workplace.
- Experience to include on their CV and college/job applications.

Making a work experience placement the best learning experience it can be.

Work experience placement learning has four stages:



01. Preparing and anticipating (pre-placement)

– getting learners ready involves discussing with them how to choose a placement, reviewing with them what they know already, what they would like to learn and introducing them to new information and ideas. This will help them to have realistic expectations of what their employer can actually offer and help them make sense of their planned placements.

02. Experiencing (on-placement)

– doing, being active and having the placements is the action stage of the cycle. If the learning process stops at the end of this stage, the learning is left to chance.

03. Reviewing and reflecting (post-placement)

– reacting to the placements involves learners in recording their thoughts and feelings about what they have learned and sharing their reactions with others who can help them further reflect on their placements.

04. Experimenting and applying (post-placement)

– trying out their new understanding and skills in new situations, potentially another placement, enables learners to further refine, adapt, and develop.



Get to know your local schools

You can make initial contact with your local schools by emailing the headteacher or the CWRE leader via the school's website. Links can also be made by signing up to initiatives such as the Careers Wales Education Business Partnership, which provides opportunities for pupils, teachers, and often parents, to meet and interact with employers. See the **Careers Wales** website to explore ways you can support local schools and learners.

By working with schools you can design and tailor work experience placements that help learners to go further in reaching their potential. Close collaboration will help schools to enrich the curriculum for learners. The world of work is an important resource and relevant context for motivating learners. When learners go out on work experience placements, they not only learn firsthand about the requirements and expectations of employers but also about the changing nature and future of work. The teachers who visit learners on their placements or participate in post-placement activities also benefit from learning about the new demands and challenges that young people will face.

Take the opportunity to develop your staff

By involving staff as work experience placement supervisors, mentors and supporters of learners, you can increase their job satisfaction and give them a professional learning opportunity, especially if they are new to leading and managing the work of others.



Develop your approach to links with schools

Work experience placements are one of the ways in developing your links with schools. Careers Wales can also help you explore a range of options you can share your knowledge and experience to give learners a unique insight into your organisation and the world of work, including:

- Presentations to help relate specific subject areas to the world of work.
- Employer vlogs and videos.
- Visits to employer premises.
- Careers carousel and employer networking days.
- Specific workshops (for example, interview hints and tips or mock interviews).
- Careers fairs.
- Supporting staff engagement activities, e.g. mentoring learners, giving presentations, doing mock interviews, taking part in careers and skills fairs.

Work experience placement – What you need to know.

Employers and schools must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that placements are suitable and safe.

Insurance and employer liability

Most employers have the requisite employers' liability insurance but you should check this. The principal risks covered by employers' liability insurance relate to injury to learners and others and damage to or loss of property. Learners on work experience placements are treated as employees so they are covered by the employer's liability insurance if their insurer is a member of the **Association of British Insurers (ABI)**. Further guidance for employers relating to work experience placements learners is published on the ABI's [website](#).

Health and safety

It is important to identify the particular needs of an individual starting work experience placements and to identify the hazards that exist or may appear so that steps can be taken to minimise them. If employers have fewer than five employees a written risk assessment is not required. If a work experience placements student increases staff levels to five a written risk assessment is not needed for the temporary period.

The Health and Safety Executive has published guidance for employers, schools and colleges and work experience placements organisers on **the health and safety of young people** on work experience placements. The guidance explains how to approach the carrying out of risk assessments.

Guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children in Wales can be found [here](#).

The sharing of information between parents², schools and employers is important with regard to young people with additional learning needs. You can also consult [HSE Wales](#) or your relevant local authority for further advice.

Safeguarding

Schools have responsibility for ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to keep learners safe. In specific circumstances a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be necessary. The DBS is the public body that checks whether someone is a suitable person to work with children or vulnerable adults.

A DBS check will be required for a 16 or 17-year-old learner undertaking work experience placements if their placement will involve regular contact with children or vulnerable adults:

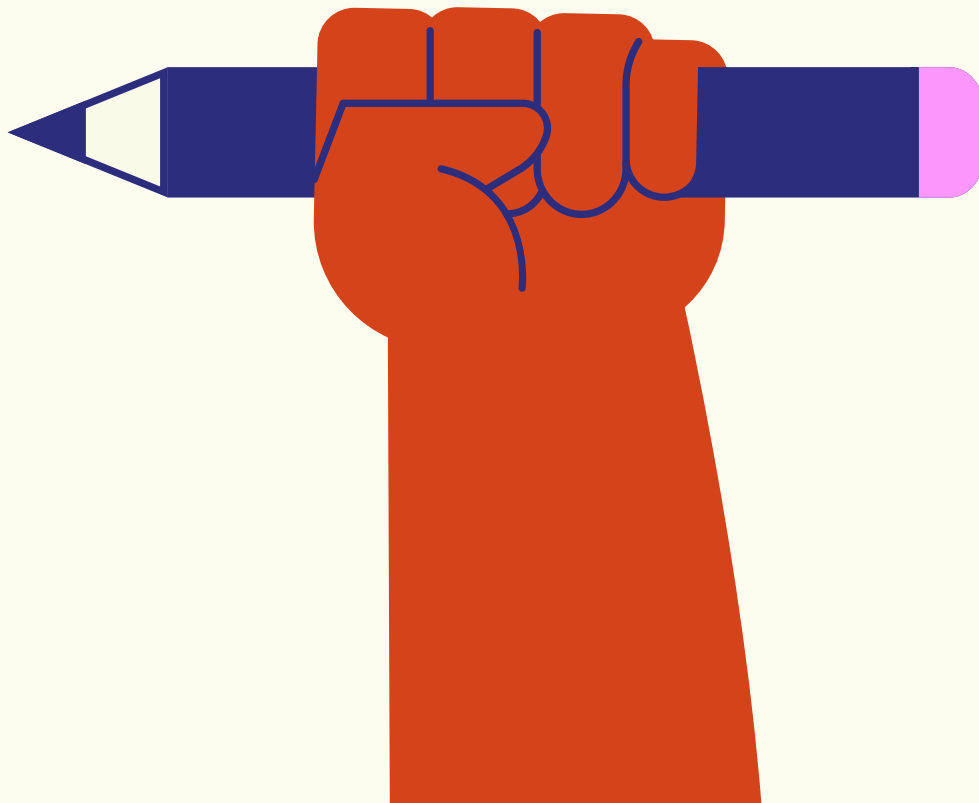
A DBS check could also be required for an adult supervising a learner on work experience placements particularly if the supervisor spends every day or long periods of time alone with that learner. Consideration must be given in particular to the nature of the supervision and the frequency of the activity being supervised, to determine what, if any, checks are necessary.

Further information and advice may be sought from the school's designated safeguarding lead, external co-ordinating agencies (e.g. Local Authorities and Colleges in some areas), the DBS, the [DfE](#) and relevant organisations.



Inclusive practices

The provision and allocation of placements should be underpinned by a strong commitment to social justice. Schools and employers must ensure that their policies and processes comply with the 2010 Equality Act. They also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for learners with additional learning needs or other support needs who might be at greater risk so that they can participate in work experience placements. Employers, therefore, who can offer tailored placements with appropriate activities, designed in conjunction with the school, will be particularly welcomed.



What you need to know...

Pre-placement tasks.

Engaging with staff

The most appropriate function in a large organisation to manage the participation in work experience placements is Human Relations (HR). Make sure that staff who are supervising and/or working alongside learners are clear about their roles and responsibilities. It is very important to schools that learners are treated appropriately in ways that are consistent with the values upheld by the school.

Engaging with schools

The schools will have a designated lead for work experience placements and other work-related activities. Identify a member of your staff to liaise with the school and to oversee learners' placements on a day-to-day basis and deal with any issues that may arise.

The school or a co-ordinating agency used by the school to find and maybe even vet placements may ask for permission to add your organisation to its database of possible placements. Be prepared to provide a brief description of what your business/organisation does and a link to your website (if appropriate); and to provide contact information, e.g. name of person, role, work email and phone number.

Engaging with learners

Engaging with the learner after the first contact (which may be through the learner directly, a parent, the school or a co-ordinating agency) contributes to the effectiveness of the placement. Invite the learner to introduce themselves to the person who will be supervising them on work experience placements. If the learner supplies a CV, their supervisor can also set aside some time during the placement to review their CV with them. Ask learners to tell you about the courses they are taking and what their understanding is of the contribution that work experience placements can make to their future plans.

Where possible, drawing up a provisional

programme for the duration of the placement is helpful to the learner and to the member of staff supervising the placement. The risk of not planning this level of detail is that learners will be given repetitive and uninspiring tasks to fill their time.

Good practice tips for the design of work experience placements programmes for individual learners include:

- Setting a challenge based on a topic of real interest to the organisation, e.g. *How could the rest area be improved? How could we reduce our carbon footprint? How could we target the youth market for our products more effectively?*
- Being creative in your approach to placements, e.g. if you have a contract with a social influencer to co-create marketing content for your organisation, consider creating a placement for a learner to work with your social influencer to develop your marketing content.
- Planning 'speed dating', e.g. giving learners the opportunity to interview a range of staff in different departments about the jobs they do.
- Arranging for a student to 'shadow' a member of staff and then write their job description/profile.
- Helping the learner to fulfil a need such as a project they want to complete using their placement as source material, e.g. *How has digital technology changed the way the organisation does business?*

Engaging with parents

Requests for work experience placements may come from your own staff seeking placements for their children. A larger organisation may want to formalise the procedure for making requests.

Some schools will ask learners to find their own placements and their parents may well help them in that task. Again, you may want to formalise the procedure for handling requests.

On-placement tasks.

Induction arrangements

Arrange an induction for the learner at the start of their placement which covers:

- Practical matters, e.g. supervision arrangements, facilities, hours of work and breaks.
- Health and safety, e.g. avoiding workplace risks and hazards and taking responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others.
- Behaviour and dress codes, e.g. punctuality, workwear, customer care.
- Overview of the organisation.
- Discussion of the programme for the placement with an emphasis on how the planned activities will enable the learner to achieve their goals while at the same time doing worthwhile work for your organisation.

The induction is a good opportunity to gauge the balance of challenge and support which will suit the learner. Some learners will start their placements with more confidence and aptitude than others, but the aim is to help all learners to make progress.

It is also an opportunity to get to know more about the interests of the learner. It may be possible to adjust the programme for the placement to accommodate a specific request made by the learner.

It is important to get in touch with the school immediately if an unexplained absence occurs.

Assessing the learner's performance

The school may ask you to comment on particular aspects of the learner's performance. It is also worthwhile developing your own aide memoire or list of prompts to cover areas such as:

- Qualities and attitudes, e.g. reliable, responsible, enthusiastic, conscientious, cooperative, initiative.
- Skills, e.g. punctuality, customer care, work readiness, employability.
- Aptitude, e.g. suitability for this kind of work.
- Achievements.

Before the end of the placement, arrange a session with the learner to celebrate the 'take-aways', e.g. the learner's strengths, appreciation of their contribution to your organisation, what the learner feels they have gained from the placement but also suggested areas for development. Providing the learner with a certificate and/or short report for their portfolio that they can show future employers is something that they will value.

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Post-placement tasks.

Complete any documentation that the school requests such as witness statements attesting to the learner's performance of specific skills.

A discussion with the school's work experience placements leader/co-ordinator is a good opportunity to review arrangements and to make a note of action points for future placements. This can also help to build sustainable partnerships with schools.



Evaluating and improving the quality of work experience placements.

Schools may ask you to complete an evaluation, but you may wish to carry out your own evaluation as well. Evaluation is a way of obtaining feedback on the worthwhileness of your participation and how the quality of work experience placements can be improved in the future.

You could also consider applying for a quality award to validate your evaluation, e.g.:

- The UK-wide Institute of Learner Employers offers an award for the **'Best Work experience placements, Internship or Placement Programme'**. The award seeks to recognise a programme that best prepares learners for work whilst delivering measurable benefits to the employer.
- The annual **Careers Wales Valued Partner Awards**. Work experience placement.



What you need to know...

Summary of the main stages in the work experience placements model.

This checklist of the main stages involved in work experience placements is a summary of the good practice information and advice in the preceding sections of the guide.

Before a work experience placement

Be clear about the benefits of work experience placements for employers, schools and learners and the roles and responsibilities of each.

Find out:

- The purpose and value of placements.
- How to improve quality.



Make contact with organisations that can provide advice on how to organise and manage work experience placements, e.g. RSPs, LAs, FSB, Careers Wales, CIPD.

Find out:

- About existing guidelines and model programmes.
- Ready to use/adapt documentation, e.g. checklists, report forms.
- Good practice tips, e.g. how to jointly determine learning objectives for placements, how to streamline procedures.
- How to provide opportunities for all learners, especially those with protected characteristics and additional needs.
- Requirements and expectations relating to participation age, permitted employment, insurance cover, health and safety, safeguarding (e.g. DBS checks).



Make direct approaches to your local schools – ask for the CWRE or work experience placement lead.

Find out:

- How work experience placements can support the new curriculum, e.g. creating assignments linked to the curriculum.
- The school's administrative procedures, e.g. timing and duration of placements, which group(s) are involved), how learners are prepared and supported by the school – *Are any 'reasonable adjustments' required?*
- What the school expects from you, e.g. brief details of the placement offer (a mini job description), the participation of employers in the briefing and debriefing of learners, arrangements for supervising learners on placement.
- Contact details and whether a member of staff will be visiting the learner on their placement. It is especially important to know who to contact at school if the learner is unexpectedly absent and how to end an unsuccessful placement with minimum damage to all parties.



Prepare your staff and identify a supervisor for the placement.

Find out:

- What members of staff can offer in the way of opportunities for the learner (as far as possible learners should be given real work to do).

Engage with the learner.

Find out:

- If a preliminary visit by the learner is possible to discuss the programme for the placement.
- If the learner will be expected to complete a diary or logbook.
- What additional information the learner needs, e.g. information about your business, how to get to their placement, who to ask for, hours of work, what to wear, whether there is a kitchen.

During a work experience placement

Ensure there is always a designated person looking after the learner during their placement.

Arrange an induction for the learner on the first day to cover issues such as introduction to your organisation, health and safety, IT security, commercial confidentiality.



Monitor that all is well with the learner and that they are on track to achieve the learning objectives for the placement.

Arrange a 'wash up' meeting with the learner at the end of the placement to review what went well and what could be done differently or better next time. Provide a brief assessment of the learner's performance. Listen especially to what they have to say.

After a work experience placement

Contribute to the follow-up

- Provide the school with feedback on the learner's achievements on the placement.
- Be willing to contribute to reflection and review activities organised by the school, if possible.
- Give the school feedback on ways of improving the work experience placement.

Carry out your own reflection on your participation in the work experience placement.

Finding out more.

Careers Wales

Careers Wales provides a range of free services to employers in Wales and can help you work with schools in your area. Contact their team of Business Engagement advisers for information and advice.

CIPD

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has published *Making work experience work: Tips for employers*.

Education and Employers

Education and Employers is a UK-based charity that works with schools, employers and a wide range of partners to give learners the opportunity to find out first-hand about jobs and the world of work.

FSB Wales

The FSB runs a Community Award open to businesses who participate in initiatives that support their local community.

Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)

You can get information and advice from your local Regional Skills Partnership:

North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (NWRSP)

Sian L. Roberts – SianLloydRoberts@rspnorth.wales

South East Wales Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership (CCRSP)

Richard Tobutt – Richard.Tobutt@newport.gov.uk
Caryn Grimes – Caryn.Grimes@newport.gov.uk

The **Cardiff Commitment** is indicative of the support to young people, schools and businesses to promote the healthy growth of the economy and society in the Cardiff region.

South West Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP)

Jane E Lewis – JELewis@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Louise Grove – louise.grove-white@powys.gov.uk

Speakers for Schools

Consider hosting virtual work experience placements through organisations such as **Speakers for Schools**.





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