

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON WORK EXPERIENCE

At Key Stage 4, when they are 14-16 years old, the majority of students undertake Work Experience placements. This can either be for a one or two week block or for one or more days a week over a number of weeks.

Most schools use the services of brokers, mainly Education Business Partnerships or Trident. The brokers help identify suitable placement opportunities, organise the necessary health and safety and insurance checks, and often also support the matching and briefing of students.

The National EBP website contains contact information about work experience organisers throughout the country. www.nebpn.org or the national office can sign post employers to their nearest contact to discuss local arrangements in more detail. The telephone number of the national office is 01635 279914

Frequently Asked Questions

1) The student will be bored. How will I know what they can do?

The broker who visits you will help you identify suitable tasks for the young person based on their knowledge of other similar environments.

A short pre-placement interview with the young person will also help identify their interests and objectives for the placement. The student may have specific information he or she needs for course work, which will need to be discussed. The pre-placement interview will also help them feel more settled when they arrive.

A successful placement should be structured so that:

- There is an initial induction on the first day, which will include a tour of the premises, fire procedures, and other relevant health and safety considerations.
- There is some explanation/over-view given of the work of the company, its aims and objectives.
- There is a named person for the young person to report to during the placement
- There are some “hands on” tasks and guidance as to their completion
- There is some time to observe more complex tasks or an opportunity to see training videos or other training material
- There is time for the student to reflect and record their observations in a logbook
- There is a review session at the end of the placement.

Some employers find that a “mixed” placement works well, where the student spends time in different departments. This can give them a better insight into the company. If they can also have short interviews with one or more members of staff in the departments, this will greatly add to their career knowledge. However, in an environment where there are a number of tasks that the student can do, then working in one department might be more appropriate.

Some companies build in a short project to the placement. This could involve research about aspects of the company (e.g. using company brochures, website, interviews etc); it could involve looking at the use of IT in the company and why different methods are used. There are portfolios of projects (produced by Trident), which are linked to certain types of placements, and also projects linked to specific GCSE subjects, especially those in vocational areas.

2) Taking a student on work experience will add to my insurance premium?

Students on placement should generally be covered by your employer liability insurance at no additional cost, providing you have notified your insurance company about the dates of the placement in advance. However it is understood that companies do have the discretion to charge an additional amount. The National Support Group has researched this matter, and found that this additional premium is only charged infrequently.

3) Will there be too much work/paperwork?

All placement providers have to be checked for health and safety and insurance purposes and records kept of the placements as young people are involved. The bureaucracy is dealt with as efficiently as possible. Brokers are extremely aware of the time pressures on employers.

4) What about child protection?

In most cases where the student will be working with a number of adults on a block work experience CRB checks will not be required. However, the employer visitor would discuss with you whether there are policies within the company regarding declarations for staff working with children.

Circumstances where CRB checks are required would be discussed on an individual basis if these are needed, and the broker would advise on the process. This might be the case with a placement over a longer period, or where the student would be working with mainly one adult.

5) We have very busy periods and won't be able to help very often?

Brokers will note whether there are times of the year (e.g. financial year end etc) where you would not be able to help. This information would be recorded and you

should not be approached during these times. Some companies are able to help on a very regular basis, some only once or twice a year. **All help is invaluable.**

6) Won't duties be very restricted due to health and safety considerations?

Yes, the tasks agreed will need to take into account health and safety and this can sometimes appear restrictive. The initial visit to discuss the placement should include where possible the person with responsibility for health and safety for this reason. Sometimes it will be more appropriate for the young person to observe and have processes explained to him or her, rather than undertake the task himself or herself. In this way they can still gain an understanding.

7) What about risk assessments?

It is the employer's responsibility to assess the risks involved in the agreed duties. Many brokers will have a form for the employer to use for this purpose, which is then passed on to the parents before the placement. The process is to ensure that the main hazards of the workplace and the tasks are identified before the placement takes place and to ensure the safety of the young person.

.....
The most recent reference covering the legal aspect of work experience is "Work-Related Learning and the Law" which is available from the DfES. Free copies can be obtained from the publications part of the DfES website, prologue. In addition the DfES have a guide for employers about work experience.

There are a number of other resources and materials available to support work experience. These can be discussed with your local organisers.