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Work experience works. It works for young people, who get the opportunity to participate in the world of work and gain practical experience that will enable them to believe and prove that they can be valuable and productive members of the workforce. It works for employers, who see work experience as vital in providing a talent pipeline for their business. And it works for the wider economy and society, as it brings more people into work and out of long-term unemployment.

There is a structural weakness in the UK labour market that consigns too many young people to long-term unemployment in good economic times as well as bad. Employers recognise this; many are actively trying to do what they can to address it – and work experience plays a valuable part in this. It is striking how many employers we speak to who are motivated at least as much by a desire to engage with their communities and ‘do the right thing’ as they are by the ‘business case’ for their own organisation.

All the employers we spoke to emphasised the two-way nature of work experience. Both employers and young people participating in schemes give something and get something back. Employers are genuinely concerned to achieve the best possible outcome for the young person and see it as their duty to help improve access to the labour market. They expect young people to participate actively and to make an effort to get the most from their placements. But they also expect their existing employees to invest time and effort in creating a real learning opportunity and a meaningful experience of the industry in which they operate.

Our updated guide includes a clearer ‘quality charter’ for work experience, setting out what employers should put in and what participants should get out. Most employers already offering work experience won’t have any problems signing up to this charter. The commitment and quality on offer from employers is already high, with work experience programmes in many cases dovetailing with a raft of other measures to support young people to take their first steps into the world of work – including internships, student placements and apprenticeships.

We hope this guidance will encourage more employers to follow suit. Work experience works. It is a valuable contribution by business to the development of young people’s employability skills and their career aspirations. We hope more employers will offer more of it – for the benefit of young people, employers, the labour market and society.

Stephanie Bird
Director of HR Capability and Public Policy
Let me start by saying that I firmly believe in and stand behind our work experience programme and I am proud to be associated with it. I hear regularly from host employers about the many examples of young people who are receiving help to overcome their barriers to entering work, be that simply gaining valuable experience and enhancing their CV, or more broadly gaining confidence and belief in themselves that they can work and achieve a life off benefits. This energises me to ensure that the Department redoubles its efforts to secure more placements across an ever broader range of sectors, so more young people can benefit from this excellent scheme.

It is in that context that I welcome this enhanced guidance, in particular the ‘quality charter’ which will go a long way to ensuring that employers and participants are very clear about what is required of them and, more importantly, what they can expect to gain from their involvement in work experience. This is critical to removing any misconceptions which may exist about what work experience is and what we are trying to achieve, so we can free employers to concentrate on delivering the quality opportunities they are offering young people. And I am confident that through this guidance we will attract more employers who are not currently involved with the scheme to do the same.

I have placed on record the gratitude which I extend to the employers that have stuck with us throughout the recent period of uncertainty. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the very many employers who are offering work experience – whether that is through our schemes or their own long-standing schemes – for the work they are doing to give young people the boost they need to transform their lives. The example you are setting to other employers should not be underestimated; work experience works and together, we can make a difference to the lives of many thousands of young people.

Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP
Minister of State for Employment
Work experience 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 the employer and the young person both adhere to. As an employer we are committed to offering consistently high-quality experience placements in which:

1. 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.

2. There is clarity about the role that the young person plays in our organisation and how they will be **supported, supervised and mentored** by our employees.

3. **Expectations are managed**, the young person knows what they will contribute, whether there are any job opportunities or not and how we might be able to help the young person to build their CV.

4. The young person is treated as an **active member of staff**, but the placement is not used to fill a vacancy.

5. The young person is introduced to the **structure of working life**; they are helped to learn and to develop a range of transferable skills, personal qualities and competencies which will contribute towards their employability.

6. **Success is celebrated** and the young person has an enjoyable and **positive work experience** that encourages them to become more confident in their abilities.

7. The young person is encouraged to relate their 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.

8. We clearly explain to the young person up front what our expectations are: **show an interest** in the organisation and the industry and **make the most of the opportunity**; demonstrate a **willingness to learn**; respect the **values** of the host organisation; and **abide by the rules**.

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. We have an **integrated approach to working with**, investing in, recruiting and developing young people, with work experience placements being a part of our commitment to help young people to access and progress in our organisation.
WHY USE THIS GUIDE?
This guide is for you if you are thinking about offering work experience placements for young jobseekers or if you want to improve your current offer and better align it to your overall approach to investing in and developing young people. It provides you with:

- information about the practical steps you need to take to set up high-quality work experience placements
- background information on government initiatives to help young jobseekers, and your role within this
- best practice case studies from employers who offer work experience
- advice on how to support, supervise and mentor the young person in order to maximise the benefits of the placement.

WHAT IS WORK EXPERIENCE?
‘Work experience is a two-way street: both give something and both get something back. There are responsibilities on both sides to make it work. If it works, we have very positive experiences.’

Jennifer Lee, HR Director, Jurys Inn

Work experience is an opportunity to introduce young people to the reality of working life within a willing organisation, to help them to secure and sustain employment. The aim is to provide learning and insight into working life by exposing the young person to a variety of tasks and experiences. This will be for a limited period of time during which individuals have an opportunity to learn directly about the working environment.

WHY GET INVOLVED?
Young people are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market because they lack both the experience of the workplace and the job-specific skills that employers ask for. Many employers shy away from employing young people because they see them as a ‘risk’. Work experience can help break the cycle of ‘no experience, no job’. It can also help to challenge employer perceptions of young people’s skills and attitudes, give young people access to networks and help them to make more informed career choices.

Research shows that the more contact young people have with employers, the better their chances of finding themselves stable employment.

International comparisons show that those countries that have better vocational education and training also have lower youth unemployment. This is because young people combine school- and work-based training and are exposed to workplace realities, helping them to develop their employability skills, understanding of the working world and networks much earlier in their lives. This is a win-win situation for everyone: employers get the skills they need, young people gain access to the labour market and society can avoid the negative consequences and long-term scarring of high youth unemployment.

THE BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS
Work experience placements enable you to access a wider range of talent and engage with your community, potentially with a view to employing more young people as part of your workforce in the longer term. Offering work experience placements can also make a useful contribution to your strategic talent management and workforce planning. Young people offer new ideas and fresh ways of thinking, reflecting the interests and needs of the next generation of customers and consumers. Furthermore, it can be an opportunity for staff development with potential for management opportunities, because staff can act as ‘buddies’ or mentors (see section 4 on ‘Supporting the young person”).
HOW WORK EXPERIENCE WORKS FOR EMPLOYERS
Apart from making a real difference to someone’s working life, offering work experience is beneficial for organisations for a number of reasons:

- **Recruitment opportunities:** providing work experience placements can be a way to access the local labour market and explore a talent pipeline that the employer would not have considered otherwise.
- **Staff development:** supervising and coaching young people on work experience offers an excellent opportunity to develop employees’ management capabilities, particularly for those who may not normally have any line management responsibilities.
- **A more engaged workforce:** providing work experience sends a positive message to the wider workforce about the values of the organisation, which can support efforts to build employee engagement.
- **Engagement in the local community:** investors, customers, consumers and service users have increasingly strong opinions about the ethical role employers can and should play in society. Work experience placements provide a valuable means of creating a positive image, in which the organisation helps to address social issues related to worklessness in the community.
- **Contribution to economic development in the local area:** by helping to tackle some of the issues around deprivation and youth unemployment.

HOW WORK EXPERIENCE WORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETY
Work experience can have a hugely positive impact on young people's employability and can play a significant role in attempts to reduce youth unemployment. It can:

- **break the vicious circle** that many young people find themselves in, where they can’t get a job because of lack of experience and can’t get experience because they can’t find a job
- provide young people with an understanding of the structure and reality of working life, which is crucial if they are to secure and sustain employment
- **provide feedback and coaching to enable young people to develop skills,** including those required in specific jobs and sectors
- help young people to make informed choices about their futures and allow them to learn more about specific industries, organisational cultures and job roles
- allow young people to gain experience of working with people, enhancing their social and communication skills, and awareness of how to present themselves and behave in a work context
- provide opportunities to learn about recruitment processes (such as how to do job interviews and how to apply for a job)
- provide a positive experience of the world of work that builds the young person’s confidence and motivation
- help young people to build their CVs (for instance by providing some formal training) and support them in the development of networks.
THE EMPLOYERS’ VIEW ON WORK EXPERIENCE

‘We are committed to helping young people to enter the workforce. But we also see this as a recruitment opportunity. We are a growing business and need new talent to deliver. There is no substitute for people experiencing the culture of the organisation and for us to experience their work ethic and attitude. It helps people to discover the industry and why they want to work here.’ Jeremy Stafford, Chief Executive, UK and Europe, Serco

‘We want the young person on work experience to be an active member of staff. But we never use these schemes to fill a vacancy. What we are trying to do is to give them an enjoyable and a positive work experience.’ Emma Wandsforth, HR Director, Veolia

‘It’s an excellent way to allow a young person that might not have thought about a job with us to discover the industry. Many people think hospitality is all about long hours and shift work and they are put off from applying. But some people have a natural affinity to work in the industry and they can discover this in a couple of weeks.’ Jennifer Lee, HR Director, Jurys Inn

‘A lot of people want to go into publishing, but they don’t know what this industry is about, so a work experience placement gives them the opportunity to find out what it is really like, as opposed to their dreams. It’s also a great way to find people who can come to work for us. Sometimes they also work for our competitors afterwards, which is fine too, as we don’t do this just for us but for the industry as a whole. We offer placements because it’s the right thing to do.’ Neil Morrison, Group HR Director, Random House Group
THE PRINCE’S TRUST: THE YOUNG PERSON’S VIEW ON WORK EXPERIENCE

The Prince’s Trust believes that work experience opportunities are needed more than ever, as they prepare the young person for the workplace, help them to gain employability skills and are a potential route to a permanent job.

‘The best schemes help young people to understand the reality of work while inspiring them to gain the skills they need to progress, benefiting both the employer and the young person. We recognise the time and resources those employers that offer work experience placements invest in young people and we want to encourage more to do the same. But this should never provide companies with an alternative to creating jobs for young people.’ Nikki Wade, Head of Innovation, The Prince’s Trust

According to the Prince’s Trust, a work experience placement provides an opportunity for young people to experience working life and become better prepared for the job market. It enables them to:

- learn and use a range of transferable skills, personal qualities and competencies which will contribute towards employability
- work alongside adults as part of a team
- become more confident in their abilities
- relate their experience and skills to the workplace
- make more informed choices about their futures.
WHO DO I WORK WITH WHEN OFFERING WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS?
In the case of young jobseekers, Jobcentre Plus (or a charity that is working with Jobcentre Plus) matches people seeking work experience with employers offering a placement. Once you have worked out the details of your placement (which part of your company, who will supervise and mentor the young person, what tasks they will be performing/projects they will be involved in) you can communicate them to Jobcentre Plus. Be as clear as you can be in your communication with Jobcentre Plus. It is also advisable to stay in touch with your contact over the work experience period and have regular catch-ups on progress.

WORKING WITH CHARITIES TO DELIVER WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS
Many organisations that offer work experience placements to young jobseekers are working directly with Jobcentre Plus; others, however, work with charities that collaborate with Jobcentre Plus.

This is the case with Marks & Spencer and their ‘Marks & Start’ programme:

‘Marks & Start is an important commitment within our CSR strategy, supporting people facing barriers getting into work. We work specifically with the Prince’s Trust to support young people; we have been working with them on Marks & Start since 2004, primarily through their team programme. This is a 12-week personal development course for young people and as part of the 12 weeks they spend 2 weeks doing a work placement; they can do their placement with M&S if they wish. We now also work with the Prince’s Trust on their ‘Get Into Retail’ programme. This is shorter and more focused on retail, lasting only four weeks, and as part of this the participants can spend two weeks on a placement with M&S.’

Claire Ford, Employee Engagement Manager, Marks & Spencer
HOW LONG ARE WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS?

Work experience placements for young jobseekers offered by Jobcentre Plus should last between two and eight weeks. The length of the placement is determined by the employer together with the individual and Jobcentre Plus (or the relevant charity working with Jobcentre Plus), taking into account their individual circumstances and career aspirations.

WHO PAYS FOR WHAT?

The employer does not pay a young person a wage to do a work experience placement. Jobseekers will continue to receive their benefits (and the Government will cover any travel and childcare costs if necessary), even if they leave the scheme earlier than planned. They only stop receiving benefits if they get offered a subsequent fixed-term or permanent employment contract by the employer.

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Case study: Establishing and managing your relationship with Jobcentre Plus

The strategy at Serco Group has made it easy for Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to partner with them and they recognise the value of building strong, collaborative relationships with their JCP counterparts at all levels, empowering programme delivery from both sides of the partnership.

Serco is building a robust catalogue of placements and has already registered more than 120 different types of placement with JCP, representing more than 600 annual opportunities, from aircraft maintenance and digital print room services to leisure centre services and patient care.

Each placement is carefully defined in a specification template by its host manager, including overviews of the work environment and what the participant can expect to learn and experience. The specification also includes the qualities a strong candidate should be able to demonstrate. ‘The right attitude’ always tops the list.

The completed specification is submitted to the national team at JCP then cascaded via their regional channels to the branch local to the Serco host site. A local JCP representative makes contact with the Serco host manager within ten working days of submission to plan timescales and candidate selection. The placement is then ready for promotion to prospective jobseekers.

Serco offers the same support to local JCP advisers as to their own host managers, helping them where appropriate to develop a better understanding of the organisation and how it operates, and what that means for each placement.

The Serco team managing the programme at the national level communicates frequently with the national team at JCP, and they meet monthly to review progress, address challenges and explore opportunities for programme improvement and sharing best practice. Similarly, local relationships between Serco host sites and JCP branches are activated, enhanced and carefully monitored to maintain a dynamic nationwide network of support, collaboration and, of course, celebration of success and achievement.

Source: Serco Group
However, employers often choose to offer lunch and travel expenses to young people on placements, as this helps to ensure that these opportunities are also available to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. You will need, of course, to provide any appropriate clothing, such as a uniform, if applicable.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF THE YOUNG PERSON WANTS TO LEAVE THE PLACEMENT?**
The placement is completely voluntary. This means that you should get a young person who is enthusiastic, wants to be there and is eager to learn and make the most of the opportunity. However, sometimes things don’t work out as you or the young person have imagined, so they are free to leave the placement at any time without facing any sanctions to their benefits (unless you report gross misconduct, which may lead to an investigation by Jobcentre Plus).

**WHAT SUPPORT DOES GOVERNMENT PROVIDE FOR YOUNG JOBSEEKERS?**
The Government has a number of welfare reforms which aim to help people into work. One element is an integrated package of support providing personalised help for individuals that has been introduced in 2011 called ‘Get Britain Working’. This includes work clubs, sector-based work academies and work experience. In order to provide more targeted support for young people and to address the problem of rising youth unemployment, the Government is to launch the ‘Youth Contract’ in April 2012. This will provide new opportunities for 18–24-years-olds, including apprenticeships and work experience placements (see box below for further details).

**THE YOUTH CONTRACT**
In 2011 the Government outlined a £1 billion Youth Contract to tackle the growing problem of youth unemployment. From April 2012 this will provide:

- **160,000 Wage Incentives** of up to £2,275 for employers to recruit 18–24-year-olds from the Work Programme
- **250,000 extra Voluntary Work Experience or sector-based work academy places** over the next three years, providing at least 100,000 places per year
- **up to 40,000 new Apprenticeship Grants for Employers** worth £1,500 to encourage new employers to take on new 16–24-year-olds
- **additional support worth £126 million in England to help the most disengaged 16–17-year-olds** (55,000 in total) to participate and stay in education, apprenticeships or a full-time job with training.
HELP THE YOUNG PERSON TO NAVIGATE THE LABOUR MARKET
While a typical recruitment process will not apply to work experience candidates, we encourage explaining recruitment and selection processes to the candidate so they will have some insight into how they should go about finding and applying for a job. You could also run a mock interview to help the young person to develop their interview skills. The young person will provide you with input to current work/projects but must not displace existing jobs. This is your opportunity to help them develop their skills and employability, so make sure you provide plenty of information and reassure them as much as you can about navigating their journey through the labour market.

HOW SHOULD YOU SELECT THE CANDIDATE?
Most candidates will not have much, if any, interview experience, so conventional interview techniques may not be appropriate. They may also lack confidence and therefore require a different, more supportive interview approach to bring out their skills and attributes. We recommend using less formal processes, such as a chat about the person’s employability skills, potential growth and enthusiasm rather than focusing only on academic credentials and technical requirements.

However, if there is a competitive situation with several candidates, you should also consider their academic credentials and technical skills or experience relevant to your organisation.

HOW DO I BEST MATCH THE PERSON TO THE PLACEMENT?
Matching the person as closely as possible to the placement is crucial for success. It helps to communicate your needs and the specifics of the placement to Jobcentre Plus so that they can select the right candidates:

‘The relationship with JCP is crucial. Where our work experience placements have worked is in those locations where we’ve had a very good relationship with JCP. But it’s a two-way street; employers will benefit by informing the JCP as to what they need, what kind of placements they offer and what kind of people they are looking for.’ (Jennifer Lee, HR Director, Jurys Inn)

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT AND MANAGE EXPECTATIONS
It will be useful to have a list of tasks/duties and/or a work plan for the work experience placement. Be clear on the tasks you want the young person to carry out and/or which projects you want them to contribute to. The work plan can be a standard plan which is adapted for each candidate, so you don’t need to develop a new plan each time a work experience placement is hosted. But it needs to be flexible and, while responding to your organisation’s needs, should also be tailored to the young person’s individual abilities. Each work experience participant will be different, with varying skill levels and abilities. However, it is important to manage the young person’s expectations and to ensure that they have a realistic understanding of their role in the organisation.

Work experience participants will be recruited in collaboration with Jobcentre Plus or a relevant charity that partners with Jobcentre Plus. You can decide what role you want to play in the selection process. We recommend that employers get involved as much as they can in the selection process to select the most suitable person for their organisation, as well as to give the young person some experience of recruitment processes. An informal chat with the potential candidate will help you both to see if the opportunity is right for you.
Case study: How work experience placements can help a young person

Lee McManus left school at 15 with no job to go to and no real plan for his future. He spent the next two and a half years unemployed and this proved to be a particularly difficult period in Lee's life. Lacking in direction and guidance, Lee needed a role model to help drive his ambition, but instead faced mounting pressure from his family to find employment, leaving him feeling stressed, vulnerable and isolated. After suffering a series of attacks from a distant relative, Lee’s family began to live in fear and Lee was subjected to death threats, prompting him to create a hard persona to protect himself. During this period Lee started hanging around with the ‘wrong crowd’; he became known to the police and has three criminal convictions.

Lee never lost his ambition to become a mechanic and although he tried hard to secure an apprenticeship and desperately sought to please his parents, he was repeatedly told, ‘You do not fit our criteria.’ Lee was seriously lacking in confidence and self-esteem and was incredibly disheartened that at 18 years old he was deemed too old for an apprenticeship.

After competing with more than 300 young people, Lee secured a place on the Prince’s Trust ‘Get into Cars’ programme, run in partnership with the Arnold Clark Group. Lee worked incredibly hard during the six-week programme and hugely impressed Arnold Clark staff during his work experience placement at the branch. Lee was offered an apprenticeship with Arnold Clark and again his hard work was recognised when he was nominated for Trainee of the Year. He completed his apprenticeship a full year earlier than expected.

Currently a Prince’s Trust ‘Young Ambassador’, Lee has been involved in a number of projects and has supported the Trust at recruitment events to inspire other young people. Lee plans to continue training and is working towards becoming a Master Technician.
IS IT NECESSARY TO GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE ON WORK EXPERIENCE A FULL INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION?
For most young people, coming to work for you on a placement will be a very new experience. Most of them have not yet been in employment and some, because of their family backgrounds and social circumstances, may not have had any insight into the world of work. When they start a placement with you, it will be very beneficial for the individual's development for them to receive an introduction to your company and the workplace. It's also part of the ‘employment’ process to ‘bed in’ as a new employee. A proper induction also makes the young person feel valued and offers the opportunity for them to ask questions and give feedback so the induction can be improved for future candidates.

A well-designed induction process can make the transition into the world of work for a young person on work experience a smooth and enjoyable experience. That is why we recommend taking some time to think about their induction carefully. Even though the work experience may only last for a few weeks, you must still prepare for their arrival.

WHAT SHOULD THE INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION CONTAIN?
The induction is an opportunity to get to know the young person; this is where you can start building a good relationship, understand their previous experience, talk about the expectations on each side, identify areas for development, establish the young person’s goals and allow space for the young person to ask questions. It should also include:

• an introduction to your organisation (including its history, products and services, culture and values), including how the company is structured, and to key people who the individual on work experience will have contact with
• a tour of your facilities, including work areas, where to get food from inside or outside your company, where the nearest toilets are, first aid facilities and where the fire exits are situated, including evacuation procedures; this should also include health and safety information (this is a legal requirement)
• a clear outline of what your requirements and expectations of the young person are, including a discussion of the day-to-day duties that the individual will be responsible for (such as projects that the individual will be working on). This should also include room to add in the skills or experience the young person is keen to develop
• a plan or schedule for the individual’s first and possibly second week in the organisation, clearly outlining what they are doing each day (for example who to meet, and so on)
• allocating a ‘buddy’ to the young person to allow them to ask questions in a more informal setting. This role is really important to support a young person and it should be someone keen to do the role and with a friendly, supportive nature. For example, it could be a junior member of staff keen to develop management skills.

However, try not to overburden the individual on their first morning, so give them plenty of time to digest any information or forms that you pass over to them.
Depending on the nature of your organisation, you may also need to:

- inform reception or colleagues of the work experience participant’s arrival on their first morning
- set up computer login details that they will be able to use and provide them with any documentation that they need to read before they can begin work.

Finally, don’t make assumptions and be as clear as possible about what is expected in terms of hours, dress, and so on. You also need to bear in mind that some of the young people might not have many clothes and this will need to be handled very carefully. Ask Jobcentre Plus or your relevant charity for advice and help if necessary.

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**Best practice case study: Work experience placements at Jurys Inn**

**Jurys Inn** is one of the fastest-growing hotel brands in Europe, with 32 hotels across the UK, Ireland and the Czech Republic. The company has been recently named as the ‘Best Independent Hotel Brand in 2012’ and has also received Gold Standard accreditation by Investors in People in recognition of its commitment to investing in and developing their workforce. **Jurys Inn** welcomes and encourages the contribution of young people to their business and is highly committed to delivering high-quality placements for a variety of young people, via work experience placements and placements for students, graduates and interns.

**Jurys Inn** are particularly enthusiastic about work experience placements for young jobseekers, as ‘we have plenty of opportunities for young people and there are none of the traditional “barriers” to progression you might encounter in other industries’, **Jennifer Lee, the group’s HR Director**, explains: ‘for us, it is really down to the ability and attitude of the individual – if you work hard we will deliver the skills training and support for career development. We believe in growing our own workforce and that talent comes in a variety of forms. That’s why the programme appeals to us. We’ve always worked with JCP to offer opportunities for the unemployed.’

**Jurys Inn** fully supports the ‘Get Britain Working’ campaign and actively engages with Jobcentre Plus to give individuals the opportunity to undertake work experience placements in a number of their hotels.

“We understand that for some people, entering a new and unfamiliar workplace can be daunting, so we treat these individuals like any other Jurys Inn employee by providing them with an orientation of the workplace on their first day and a work “buddy” to help them feel welcome and to help them settle in. This is followed by a comprehensive induction programme, which includes various health and safety themed training courses which are complemented by practical training on the standards and procedures of their department and awareness of the hotel in general. After their initial induction programme, we ensure that our work experience participants are closely supervised and supported on shift, so they can effectively carry out their duties and feel confident in doing so. We view the work experience programme as a win-win initiative; the participants gain experience in working with people, which in turn enhances their social and presentation skills and also allows them to get direct feedback from their supervisor. We, as a company, also benefit as the investment we put into the work experience programme can result in us taking on hard-working people who are friendly, eager to learn and have the potential to grow within the business.’

Source: Jurys Inn
WHAT TASKS SHOULD THEY DO?
If work experience is to be beneficial to both the employer and the young person, it is imperative that the young person is given as much insight into the world of work as possible, so think ‘tasks not tea’. Otherwise they will not be exposed to any opportunities for professional development, nor will they be able to demonstrate their practical experience to potential employers.

Good practice is to offer them a ‘mini-project’ they can work on at points during the placement, which could relate to an area you are particularly keen to get young people’s views on, or something they are interested in, but is not ‘business crucial’ for the employer.

That said, as outlined earlier, most of these young people will have had limited exposure to working life and may have areas for skills development. The work experience is about supporting an individual in developing their skills to increase their opportunities in the labour market. Identifying some work-shadowing opportunities and, where possible, assigning them a concrete task that they could work on with supervision, but with scope to use their ideas and creativity, are ways of giving the young person a real flavour of the world of work.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: THE SERCO PASSPORT
At Serco, the importance of preparing young people for employment is taken very seriously. The work experience programme is structured specifically to enable the greatest benefit to each and every participating young jobseeker.

In support of this, Serco have designed the ‘Discover Serco Work Experience Passport’. The goal of this document is to stimulate the young person’s interest in their immediate and wider working environment, and encourage them to actively find out about the organisation and working life. ‘The passport presents a structure for the journey of discovery they will undertake while in their placement,’ explains Oliver Blackwell, HR Project Manager for Serco Group. ‘The first half provides information on the wider organisation; who we are, what we do and how and why we do it. The second half is filled with prompts for research activities – we call them “Discovery Challenges” – with corresponding pages for the young person to make notes under headings such as “Personal appearance”, “Security” and “Health and safety”. This exercise also helps to embed an understanding of our expectations of our employees, which are just as applicable to those participating in work experience.’ The young person’s manager will go through the passport with the young person at regular intervals to check that the learning takes place and provide support if necessary.
WORKING HOURS AND TIME OFF FOR JOB SEARCH
As the young person is out of work and looking for employment, you have to allow some flexibility around hours of attendance on placement to allow them time off to look for jobs and/or to attend job interviews. However, while working hours can be flexible to adapt to individual needs, they should still provide a representative experience of the world of work.

HOW SHOULD I DEVISE A SUITABLE WORK PLACEMENT PLAN?
You should prepare a full plan for the work placement, which can be adapted for each individual work placement. Preparing properly for a work placement is key to its success and smooth running, so it is less resource-intensive for employers and easy to manage. An effective way to devise a suitable work plan is to consult colleagues to find out if they have any specific projects they feel an individual could contribute to and if they have some time to supervise and mentor the young person.

Remember that the young person on work experience is there to learn, so it is important to keep them active and engaged throughout their placement to ensure that their motivational levels are kept up and they have a positive experience of the world of work and what it means to be part of a team. Having a concrete work plan will also help the young person to effectively support the team without needing constant supervision.

Above all, it is important that the young person has a positive and encouraging experience in the world of work, so it’s important to be prepared to be non-judgemental and demonstrate patience and understanding – ultimately, you are helping a young person take a real step towards employment.

BEST PRACTICE: HOW TO GAIN BUY-IN FROM LINE MANAGERS
The objective of the Department for Transport is to offer 1,000 work experience placements, with a single, structured approach.

‘A key principle underpinning the DfT scheme is that young people are brought in for their own development rather than as a resource. Being clear about this up front enabled us to win the hearts and minds of managers, many of whom could relate to young people in a difficult situation. We put together the ten-day work placement programme based on the needs of the target group of young unemployed people. We worked closely with JCP to ensure we understood what would be most useful and, for example, the placement plan includes a training day on business communications skills and makes use of a workbook to be completed each day by participant and manager. We also try to make things easy for line managers. This includes a structured work placement plan with guidance on what to do each day, including induction and an interview at the end of the placement. We also produced a line managers’ guide.’

Linda Ainsbury, Head of Transport Learning Group, Department for Transport
HOW DO I PROVIDE LEARNING AND TRAINING THAT IS TRANSFERABLE?
The purpose of the placement is to enhance the young person’s employability and give them something meaningful to put on their CV. So the more learning and training you can provide that would result in some formal accreditation or that is easily transferable and recognisable for other employers, the more helpful this is to the young person who needs to demonstrate their employability to potential employers. It is also helpful to support the young person in reflecting on the skills they have acquired and how these can be best translated into something employers are looking for, as most of the time young people tend to struggle to relate their skills to what is required in the workplace.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSFERABILITY OF SKILLS LEARNED
‘The understanding of transferability of the skills learned through work experience is very important. We work with a number of young carers and others who don’t recognise the skills that they hold and the transferability of these. Any advice the employer can give in terms of CV and interviews is also really key – again it is about helping young people translate their experience into what employers want to see. This should be part of the work plan so that people understand that the tasks they have are building on their skills.’ Puja Darbari, UK Director Policy, Research and Media, Barnardos

‘As a large employer we have resources, such as Campus Veolia, our training centre, and we believe such resources can make a difference in helping people into work. Our work experience programmes combine on-the-job experience with more formal learning, such as health and safety training. We want to give the young person some form of formal training they can put on their CV, to demonstrate to other employers that they have learned something. We provide them with a day certificate from the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health qualification.’ Emma Wordsworth, HR Director, Veolia
Organisations should ensure there is a dedicated person(s) who has ring-fenced time in their work schedule to supervise the young person on work experience. This would be a good development opportunity for an employee who wants to develop their management capability. In addition, where possible you should appoint a separate mentor or coach who can support the young person more informally.

**HOW CLOSELY DO WORK EXPERIENCE INDIVIDUALS NEED TO BE MANAGED?**

As young people on placements are new to the world of work, the way that they are managed is crucial. Good management and supervision will help the young person to develop more quickly, in terms of building up their confidence and demonstrating to them that they can play a positive role in the world of work.

**THE ROLE OF MANAGERS IN MAKING THE PLACEMENT WORK**

CIPD research into employee engagement and line management highlights the following behaviours as key to getting the best out of staff:

- reviewing and guiding
- providing feedback, praise and recognition
- providing appropriate levels of autonomy and empowerment
- taking an interest in the individual
- being available to talk if an employee has a question or a problem
- having a personal/approachable manner.

It is likely that these behaviours are especially important in the management and development of young people on work experience placements, who in many cases are having their first experience of the workplace.

To find out more about line management, please have a look at: [cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/role-line-managers-hr.aspx](http://cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/role-line-managers-hr.aspx)

**DO I NEED TO APPOINT A MENTOR OR A COACH?**

In addition to ensuring a member of staff is supervising the young person during their placement, you should consider appointing a separate mentor, coach or buddy to the young person who can help them more informally to navigate the workplace. A mentor can provide the person on a placement with advice and further objective feedback, outside the more formal relationship with their manager. Try to select an employee who is naturally helpful, good with people and has the desire to help a young person in their working life. Make sure you also give them some training for this new role; this is also a development opportunity for your staff. Alternatively, a ‘buddy’ (who could be a junior member of the team keen to develop their skills) can offer valuable support to the young person. They ‘look after’ the young person during their placement, check how things are going, take them to lunch, help them with any questions and act as a person of contact more generally.
COACHING AND MENTORING THE YOUNG PERSON: BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Veolia run a mentoring scheme for their work experience placements. Each young person has a line manager and supervisor but also a mentor from the same team: ‘We ask for volunteers for mentors; they get some training on how to be a mentor. It’s a development opportunity for staff; they get a day of training on how to become a mentor,’ explains Emma Wordsworth.

At Marks & Spencer each young person has a coach assigned to them that will train them. They get a ‘coaching card’ which displays certain behaviours or elements of learning. These cards need to be signed off by the coach to demonstrate that the learning took place.

‘A coach is a recognised role on the M&S career path’, explains Claire Ford. ‘There is training attached to becoming an M&S coach but we don’t tailor it for work experience – as coaching is a broader skill that is applied across the workplace. Coaching young people is not any different – it sometimes requires a bit more patience but our store managers would select the right coach to mentor a work experience candidate’.

PASTORAL CARE AND SUPPORT

It is important that a young person on a work experience placement is supported in their (often first) experience of the working world. A young person, through naivety or lack of maturity, can fall foul of policies or standards of behaviour in the early days and it is vital that they have a support network in place to guide them through. They will not know many things you take for granted. Someone, such as a mentor or (possibly in larger organisations) the person responsible for managing the work experience programme, needs to be able to act as an advocate, to step in and have those difficult conversations very early before any formal procedures are triggered. Good line managers with effective people management skills can also fill this role by picking up on any issues in terms of behaviour as soon as they emerge, rather than waiting until they become a problem. Without this sort of support a young person on work experience placements can undermine their own success because they lack the skills, knowledge or self-awareness of how to interact with others in the workplace.

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP A RAPPORT WITH THE YOUNG PERSON ON A WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT?

The following examples are ways to help you develop a rapport with the young person:

- Allow them plenty of time to ask questions at the induction and throughout.
- Build a supportive working relationship with the young person.
- Meet the young person for lunch on their first day.
- Act as a point of contact for any concerns that the individual might have.
- Supervise and coach them during the working day.
- Provide ongoing constructive feedback.
- Help them with their communication skills.
- Give advice on working life.
- Reflect on their progress and have regular conversations about their attitude to work.
HOW SHOULD YOU REVIEW THEIR PROGRESS?

We suggest having regular conversations with the individual, reflecting on progress and their attitude. It would also be useful to arrange a stock-take mid-way through the placement to assess the individual’s progress and consider any additional development activities (is there anything you could add, any specific task they could focus on?).

There may well be areas identified for development during the placement, or issues that arise for a young person who may not have prior experience of the workplace. It is important to discuss and address any issues to maximise the young person’s learning from the placement. However, all feedback should be provided sensitively and an opportunity for discussion given, so as to avoid damaging a young person’s confidence.
At the end of the work experience placement a meeting with the young person should take place to review how everything went, for both the person on work experience as well as the employer. We recommend that you assess the success of the placement and, if appropriate, offer further support to the individual by agreeing to act as a referee and encouraging the young person to stay in touch.

**WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONCLUDE A WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT?**

As a work experience placement draws to a close, regardless of how long it has lasted, it is good practice to arrange a final review meeting with the young person to discuss a number of issues. During the review, the young person could be asked questions such as:

- What have you learned and how have you developed during this work experience?
- How well have you met your objectives?
- What are your strengths and areas for improvement/development?
- What have been your biggest/proudest achievements?
- What projects have you contributed to?
- In what ways are you better prepared for the jobs market after completing this work experience?

Moreover, there are several things that you can relay back to the young person as part of this discussion:

- How well do you think they have performed (in general and/or on specific projects)?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What areas of development do you suggest that they concentrate on in future jobs?

We also recommend asking them what feedback they have for your organisation in terms of how well the work experience was run and how this could be improved in future.

**BEST PRACTICE: HOW TO CLOSE THE WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT**

*Serco* have produced some supporting information for their line managers responsible for work experience placements (‘host managers’). This includes some advice and practical steps on how to close the placement:

- Invite the jobseeker to feed back on their impression of the organisation and the local area in which they worked. Use this as an opportunity to review the placement plan and discuss:
  - what went well
  - what the jobseeker found to be a challenge and how they dealt with it
  - what the jobseeker enjoyed/disliked most about their placement
  - how they felt about adjusting to the work environment
  - how well they settled in and worked with colleagues
  - invite the jobseeker to feed back on their impression of Serco as an organisation and the local area in which they worked
  - if the jobseeker undertook a project as part of their work experience placement, invite them to share their findings
  - encourage the jobseeker to document on the placement plan everything that they learned
  - ask the jobseeker to identify what they can use from their placement experience to update their CV.
HOW CAN YOU ACT AS A REFEREE FOR THE YOUNG PERSON?

The provision of a ‘reference’ forms part of the agreement between the employer and Jobcentre Plus and plays an important part in reassuring potential future employers about the employability of the young person. We recognise that the process of reference-giving can vary between employers, with some preferring to confirm only that a person worked with them between dates.

However, we ask employers to consider the potential importance to a young person of providing a more detailed ‘summary of experience’ to both help them focus on their own key achievements and learnings, and also to use to help promote themselves to potential employers. This might outline what the young person did during their time at the organisation and how they went about performing their tasks. This might include reference to their attitude to learning, reliability and attendance, as well as their interaction with work colleagues or customers.

BEST PRACTICE: HOW TO MAKE YOUR PLACEMENTS A SUCCESS

Line managers at the Department for Transport noticed significant improvements in terms of the young person’s self-esteem, confidence, CV writing skills and interview techniques.

The Department reflected on lessons learned and what they saw as crucial to making their work experience placements a success:

• **engaging hearts and minds of managers** – being clear about purpose and principles and following up with good communication
• **leading by example** – adopting pragmatic approaches that others could follow (such as security clearance)
• **involvement of business co-ordinators and line managers** – ensuring that they cared about outcomes and providing support and guidance to the young people
• **a simplified and structured approach for line managers and business co-ordinators** – minimising the amount of additional work required and reducing the impact of their workloads
• **standardisation of processes and schedules.**

Source: Department for Transport
THE YOUNG PERSON’S FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION ON LEARNING

Random House publishing runs around 350 work experience placements per year. All of them are only two weeks long; this is because: ‘we are inundated with offers, so if we run shorter placements we can offer more young jobseekers the opportunity to discover our industry,’ explains Neil Morrison, Group HR Director at Random House, ‘but we also offer longer, paid internships. We put all our opportunities on Facebook; that way it’s completely transparent and anyone can apply.’

Joshua Crosley has just completed a two-week work experience with the Rights Department at Random House Children’s Books, which he enjoyed thoroughly. He reflects on his learning and how this experience has helped him to develop his employability skills and will help his career choice:

‘With tasks ranging from filing reprints and organising international book submissions, to editing the RHCB Rights catalogue, the placement has benefited my career in lots of ways, not least by making me adamant that book publishing is what I want to do. The administrative tasks have developed my organisational skills — quickly teaching me to prioritise tasks and structure my working day, while editing the Rights catalogue familiarised me with book copy and sales material, informing and exercising my editorial and copy-writing skills. My colleagues in the Rights Department and across the company were welcoming and encouraging, giving me support and helpful information about the industry, and they are continuing to support me as I search for publishing employment. Within three weeks of completing the placement, I have already received my first interview for an entry-level publishing position.’

CAN YOU RECRUIT THE YOUNG PERSON AFTER COMPLETION OF THE WORK EXPERIENCE?

If you have a vacancy and the work experience placement has been successful, you can offer the young person a job. If you don’t have an immediate vacancy but would consider them in the future, encourage the young person to stay in touch. But it is important to manage the young person’s expectations and to be clear if there are no current opportunities within the organisation, so young people are able to move on to seek opportunities elsewhere where they do exist. By offering work experience to a young person, an employer is making a significant contribution to their development, even if they cannot offer a further opportunity to them.
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PLACEMENT?

Most employers also see work experience placements as a talent pipeline and a way to enhance their recruitment. If there are vacancies and things have worked out well for both sides, the young person can be employed by the organisation on a fixed-term or permanent basis:

At Veolia a young person on a work experience placement might get offered fixed-term contracts after successful completion of their placement: ‘We often offer an additional eight weeks’ paid employment so the young person can put something on their CV. They use this to come off benefits and look for a job. Sometimes it’s sick replacement or another temporary position, but this can also be transformed into a permanent job,’ says Emma Wordsworth, HR Director at Veolia.

The ambition of the Serco work experience programme is to enable young people to gain the skills and experience which will help them into employment, not guarantee them a job at the end of a placement. Serco is careful not to set the wrong expectation: ‘For their benefit, we don’t want the young person to assume that a placement at Serco is about automatically securing employment with us. You need to carefully manage expectations in order not to disappoint the young person, who may already lack in confidence,’ warns Oliver Blackwell at Serco Group. ‘However, where and when the opportunity arises, jobseekers who have demonstrated strong performance and potential are offered employment in follow-up to their work experience, thereby enriching the Serco workforce – a benefit to the organisation that host managers are only too happy to make happen when they can.’
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO GROWING YOUR OWN WORKFORCE

Many employers that run successful work experience placements often have a very integrated approach to investing in and working with young people. They also offer young people a number of other routes into their organisations, such as internships, apprenticeships, graduate schemes and post-A-Level entry jobs, and are working with schools to give pupils an early insight into working life.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are a unique way to grow your own workforce. They combine on-the-job training in your organisation with off-the-job learning. The learning takes place in context and provides a real understanding about the working world, combining practical skills with theoretical knowledge. They thus offer a career route into your organisation and an invaluable opportunity to grow the skills you need now and in the future. To find out more about how apprenticeships can help your business performance and how to set up and run high-quality apprenticeships, please see: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/_apprenticeshipsthatwork

INTERNSHIPS

Internships can be a useful tool to improve young people's employability and career choices as they provide a first experience of working life, deliver workplace-related skills and access to important networks. For employers, they are an opportunity to bring new skills into the organisation, but also to access a wider pool of labour. To find out more please see: cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/guides/internships-employers-guide.aspx

THE CIPD MENTORING INITIATIVE – WORKING WITH YOUNG JOBSEEKERS

Working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, the CIPD matches young unemployed people aged 18–24 to local CIPD members who have volunteered to be a mentor. The Jobcentre advisers inform the young people of the project and assess whether they are an appropriate candidate. The advisers then refer the young person to the CIPD, which matches them to the mentors. The mentors and young people meet for an average of six sessions to work on such things as CV writing, interview techniques and self-confidence. At the moment this is only a pilot, but we are planning a national roll-out of the initiative in the latter half of 2012.

To find out more visit: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/_coventrypilot
WORKING WITH SCHOOLS
Employers and schools both have a role to play in building the transition from the world of work into education. The awareness and understanding of the world of work should be built into the delivery of education as a coherent and integral part of learning. This will give young people the tools they need to enhance their employability skills. It also helps young people to make informed choices about their future. Many employers recognise this and work with schools through a number of initiatives (career talks, visits, work experience).

INSPIRING THE FUTURE
This initiative matches volunteers with state schools and colleges. Employee volunteers go into schools to talk about the job they do, the education or training route they took and careers in their profession/sector. Volunteers can choose to do either Career Insight Talks or Enterprise Talks. It’s a free service launched across England (to be rolled out to the rest of the UK in the future), which will see tens of thousands of people from all sectors and professions going into state schools and colleges to volunteer. Inspiring the Future is for employers of all sizes and sectors, and for staff at all levels, from apprentices and graduate recruits to CEOs.

Register for free on the secure website: www.inspiringthefuture.org

BEST PRACTICE: A TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS AND WORK PLACEMENT ORGANISERS
In 2007, NHS Careers launched ‘Step into the NHS’ – a programme of activity targeting 14–19-year-olds that aims to promote the broad range of careers in the NHS and to encourage individuals to think about joining the NHS team. They produced a briefing for employers demonstrating the benefits that greater involvement with schools, including work experience and other activities, can have in terms of career insights, reducing drop-out rates, linking the curriculum more closely to the world of work and skills development for existing staff: www.nhsemployers.org/Aboutus/Publications/Documents/Opportunity%20to%20engage%20work%20experience.pdf

They produced a toolkit entitled ‘Enabling Work Experience in the NHS’ to encourage local NHS trusts to provide worthwhile work experience opportunities for students at various stages in their education, from GCSE and A-Level to undergraduates who are studying both clinical and non-clinical courses.

The toolkit:
• challenges some of the common myths often perceived as barriers to providing work experience for young people
• offers practical tips on how to arrange a work experience placement
• includes sample programmes ranging from one-week placements to programmes extended over a term or academic year which are being successfully run by trusts across the country in a variety of settings
• provides template forms which cover the key elements of organising a placement which can be adapted to individual trusts’ needs.

For further details please see:
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/documents/Work_experience_in_the_NHS.pdf
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the CIPD we believe that we should all work together to provide better pathways into work and to help young people to access and progress in the labour market. This is why we want to encourage more employers to get involved in initiatives, such as work experience placements, which can help bridge the transition from education to working life.

Last year we produced an earlier version of this guide, Work Experience Placements that Work. This was in response to the rise in youth unemployment, especially amongst those young people that lack job-specific skills and the necessary experience of the workplace and working life. Almost a year on, the problem is still there, but there has also been a great response from employers wanting to do their bit to help. However, there are still some employers who are unsure about whether they should offer placements and there are some that look for advice to set up and design high-quality schemes. So we thought the time was right to take stock and update our guide with some examples of high-quality work experience placements run by employers and share examples of best practice.

This would have not been possible without the enthusiastic response of the following individuals and organisations, which the author of this guide would like to thank for sharing their views and experiences with us:

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- Nikki Wade, Head of Innovation, The Prince’s Trust
- Emma Wordsworth, HR Director, Veolia Environmental Services

All the information included in this guide is correct as of March 2012.

Katerina Rüdiger, Skills Policy Adviser, CIPD