

Work Experience for Schools/ students: summary guidance for managers

Objectives:

The Council is already committed to supporting young people into work through its successful apprenticeship schemes. The Council's Corporate Plan 2014-2018 includes a measure to increase the wider number of apprenticeships, training places and jobs created through Council investment projects and other activities.

This new work experience framework will now provide a structured programme to give young people a good flavour of what the Council does, the career opportunities available, and the practical experience to improve their job readiness skills so that they can be better placed to make an effective transition into work.

The Council's work experience placements will be an effective way of developing links with the local community and an essential part of being a socially responsible employer. They will not be paid and will be restricted to the age groups/ eligibility criteria specified below.

Key messages:

- A great chance to give an excellent work experience opportunity to young people attending schools/ living in OX1-OX4 postcodes or from City regeneration areas but attending schools outside the City (e.g. Wheatley Park or Gosford Hill*);
- Focus on Year 10s to 13s (15-18 year olds);
- A clear structure and organised response to requests for our work experience offering;
- Raise the quality of work experience through facilitating placements in areas of career interest for students wherever this is possible;
- Each service will be asked to consider hosting at least one place per year;
- We'll ask for a service co-ordinator to support the management of each placement:
- A clear outline programme of what the experience should cover;
- Will aim to link hands on work experience with key STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subject skills wherever possible;
- Assist candidates with CV development, interview, customer service, employability skills and feedback on their placements with the Council, i.e. would you give them a job?

How the programme will be managed:

The Council will primarily look to provide work experience placements to students from schools in the Oxford City Business in the Community cluster group or who are resident in the City OX1-OX4 postcodes (see Appendix 1: BiTC cluster schools work experience weeks for 2015 table) or from City regeneration areas but attending schools outside the City.

The Council has a preference for a work experience placement to normally consist of one continuous week but may extend this offer to two weeks if this is appropriate and where there may be a possibility to link in with Youth Ambition/ Positive Futures initiatives. Placements

will generally follow the designated weeks set aside by each school (see sample calendar under Appendix 1) but the Council will have some flexibility to explore placements during the Easter and summer holiday breaks.

The Council will deal with all additional requests for work experience on a case-by-case basis where these are sustainable, although these will not generally be encouraged, as the purpose of this strategy is to formalise a process and provide consistent, transparent procedures open to all based on the eligibility criteria outlined above and organised through work experience relationship managers at each school. (Note: HR BPs will assist service areas to consider non-school based requests for work experience placements or work shadowing in conjunction with organisational requirements). The Council will continue to support and develop its existing links with Oxford Brookes University and other key local partners wherever possible when these align with strategic objectives. This might include:

- Tackling NEETs;
- Opening opportunities for underrepresented communities within our workforce;
- Providing the chance to pilot a new initiative; or
- Pursuing an undergraduate research project within a relevant professional service or where the Council and local communities will derive a measurable mutual benefit from a social enterprise project

All individual requests from Schools must be flagged to the OD&L Advisor/ Equalities (with support from members of the HR administration team). These will be passed directly to service area HR Business Partners for their appropriate professional guidance and to hold planning conversations with service co-ordinators in order that expectations/ placements can be managed sensibly through each co-ordinator, be genuinely inclusive and open to all, and follow all employment law best practice standards: ensuring that students receive constructive feedback, have the chance to develop valuable workplace diaries, and gain an intelligent insight into the working world.

The OD&L Advisor/ Equalities will further support HR BPs by collating/ monitoring information covering gender/ ethnicity/ disability to ensure that placements are fairly available to all applicants and are having a positive impact for underrepresented communities and across all City schools.

Once the arrangements are confirmed the individual will be sent a work experience agreement to sign, which will include a confidentiality statement. This form will also ensure the Council gains all the information it needs e.g. about the interests and skills of the potential placement. A letter of confirmation of the placement will be sent by the hosting manager once it has been agreed. This will give reporting instructions such as a contact name, the start time, length of the placement and service location. Service areas might also consider meeting the student/ parents in person and to finalise details of the week via e-mail so that everyone is absolutely clear about expectations.

A suggested timetable for work placements is outlined in Appendix 2, but the aspiration of the Council is that all placements receive an “Employability Skills” session as part of the placement offer in some relevant form to the placement.

At the end of the placement:

- Students will understand the importance of organisational Values and Behaviours in work environments, how teams work and other insights;
- Students will be able to think through their experience and summarise their achievements/ skills development in a paragraph to use in their CV and through a short feedback presentation to the relevant host service team or to take away in a work place diary; and
- The Council will ensure that students who have completed work experience receive feedback and where the placement has been successfully completed provide a reference at the end of the placement

Appendix 1: BiTC cluster schools work experience weeks for 2016 template circulated by Oxfordshire County Council:

School	Dates for 2015/ 2016	Type of placement (what job areas are available to shadow)	Numbers of placements
Cherwell School	5 th – 9 th October 2015 TBC - June 2016		
Cheney School	20 th - 24 th June 2016		
Oxford Spires	29 th Feb - 4 th March 2016		
The Oxford Academy	27 th June – 1 st July 2016		
St Gregory the Great	4 th – 8 th July 2016		
Matthew Arnold School	14 th – 18 th March 2016		
Gosford Hill*	18 th – 22 nd April 2016		

NB: Please be realistic about what placements you are able to offer, and what you are not

Appendix 2: Sample work experience timetable

Week	Morning	Afternoon
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Monday	<p>Mini corporate welcome from line managers to introduce students to our business. A clear outline of the standards we expect from them e.g. our house rules, the acceptable/ unacceptable behaviours, & what we will send them home immediately for</p> <p>Walk around tour of St Aldate's/ Town Hall/ Cowley Marsh/ Horspath (Direct Services will include a comprehensive H&S induction)</p> <p>Note that arrangements for a trade based work experience timetable will differ</p> <p>Note: All placements should receive an "Employability Skills" session, e.g. including interview and presentation tips. Front line work experience students will inevitably have the opportunity to become familiar with customer care standards</p> <p>Direct Services will support students to compile work experience diaries and encourage the use of photo evidence where this is possible/ appropriate</p>	<p>Service specific inductions/ meet the teams including a discussion of the day-to-day duties that the individual will be responsible for (matching opportunities with the skills or experience the student has previously indicated they are keen to develop)</p> <p>Service areas to be responsible for temporary IT permissions/ allocating a laptop to use where necessary</p> <p>Allocate dedicated w/e buddy/ mentor</p>
Tuesday	<p>Introduce a proportionate mini-project to be worked on at points of the placement, e.g. contributing to research for a presentation, designing presentation slides or putting together a service away day agenda, compiling a practical work experience diary or evidence for a school project</p>	<p>Day-to-day tasks</p>
Wednesday	<p>Day-to-day & projects</p>	<p>Day-to-day & projects</p>
Thursday	<p>Day-to-day & projects</p>	<p>Day-to-day & projects</p>
Friday	<p>Presentation of mini-project findings to the team/ mentor (where relevant), debrief and two-way feedback</p>	<p>Closing the placement: What have you learned and how have you developed during this work experience? OCC to provide a detailed 'summary of experience' to both help them focus on their own key achievements and learning, and also to use to help promote themselves to potential employers. Feedback for us: how well the w/e was run, any improvements we could make?</p>

Appendix 3: Guidance for managers

Oxford City Council will be frequently asked to provide young people with work experience. These guidelines provide information to help those managing the process.

The aim of providing work placements:

- Provide an understanding of the world of work;
- Raise awareness of what types of career are available;
- Develop self-confidence;
- Improve transferable employability and soft communication skills; and
- Strengthen links between the Council, schools and the local community

Placements are organised directly with Schools, supported by HR BPs and service work experience co-ordinators. Work experience students are typically aged between 15 and 18 years old.

Safeguarding, risk assessments and employment law best practice:

- People on work experience are classed as employees for the period of the placement under the Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1990, and are therefore covered by the Council's insurance;
- The School and Council are required by law to carry out a risk assessment to reduce the possibility of any accidents;
- The host manager responsible for supervising the placement must be aware of their Child Protection responsibilities: guidance is set out in the Safeguarding Policy (first intranet link below) which includes advice on whether a DBS would be appropriate for any staff acting as "buddies" or mentors. Direct Services managers should refer to their existing work experience map (second intranet link below). If in doubt, contact HR BPs for advice.

<http://occweb/intranet/documents/safeguarding-children-and-vulnerable-adult-policy>

<http://occweb/intranet/people-and-learning/health-safety/at-a-glance-guides-maps/young-people-work-experience-map>

Hours of Work:

Work experience students should usually work the hours expected of any apprentice, up to a maximum of 37 hours a week (7.24 hours a day excluding breaks). Note: Students of compulsory school age should not normally work on Bank Holidays or between 10.00 p.m. and 6.00 am. Provision should be made for appropriate breaks and The *Working Time Regulations 1998* apply to work experience students.

Payment and Expenses:

Work experience is part of a student's education and the Council will make **no payment** for the work performed. However, we may agree to help out with travel or meal expenses at our discretion, e.g. where a student might be in receipt of the Pupil Premium and normally eligible for free school meals or travel passes

Practical considerations:

- Inform colleagues/reception of the work experience participant's arrival before their first day, and to set up computer login details for any programs they may be using;
- Prepare a shortened version of your normal induction for staff, giving the essential information they need to get started;
- Introduce them to the whole team and show them around the work space, kitchen/ eating areas, the location of toilets and where to put personal items. Please be clear about all break times;
- Go through a checklist of health and safety issues, especially fire drill, first aid and any hazardous areas e.g. working depots;
- Give them a short 'job description' of the tasks they will cover during their placement;
- It is possible that they have a very limited experience of working, so make sure you ask open questions, using 'what, when, why, where', when discussing the tasks. This will allow the student to give a better picture of their understanding;
- Encourage them to ask questions whenever they are in doubt about anything. It will be helpful to allocate a 'buddy' to allow them to ask questions more informally;
- It is also useful to provide a fully briefed and dedicated mentor for the placement period;
- Students are expected to dress smartly and appropriately (for the placement) and to understand the importance of promoting a professional image;
- Give them some useful documents such as the Values and Behaviours Framework and a short list of contacts and telephone numbers of people they are likely to have to phone or e-mail;
- You should have regular conversations, reflecting on their progress and attitude;
- The student will often have to complete a log of their placement, so services will be asked to provide a summary of the skills and performance of the student which may be used to complement their CV. At the end of the placement it is good practice to arrange a final review meeting with them to discuss what they have learned and achieved

Note: Standard Oxfordshire County Council work experience agreement

Employer Agreement: This agreement MUST be signed in advance of taking students:

- I understand that I will be contacted by OCC in relation to work experience processes and may be visited by the team for health and safety purposes.
- I agree to OCC holding information regarding work experience placements on their database systems and sharing this information with schools, students and parents.
- I will follow guidance at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/workexperience/placeprovide.htm>
- I understand I will be notified of student name/s and placement information prior to the placement start date. I understand the student will also contact me prior to starting.
- I confirm I will have appropriate Employer Liability Insurance to cover work experience students in place for the placement duration (and have notified my brokers if necessary)
- I am aware of the requirement on employers to complete a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and to provide information to a parent/guardian for a child of compulsory school age in accordance with the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)*.
- I will undertake to provide induction training, including Health and Safety and emergency arrangements.
- I will undertake to have due regard for the welfare of the young people in the workplace and understand that it may be necessary to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau Check in line with the 'Safeguarding of Children in Education' [DfES Guidance September 2004]
- I will notify the school in the event of any absence, early termination of placement, injury, or any other difficulties regarding the student, or should an incorrect student appear.

Signed:

Date:

Return of this form from the email address to which this was sent will be accepted as your signature. Therefore this form can be returned by email.

Chapman, Debbie - Environment &
Economy <mailto:Debbie.Chapman@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Appendix 4: Standard response letter for applicants not eligible for work experience

Thank you for your expression of interest in a work experience placement with Oxford City Council.

The Council has a structured programme of work experience which focusses on schools; to give young people a good flavour of what the Council does, the career opportunities available, and the opportunity to improve their job readiness skills so that they can be better placed to make an effective transition into work or the next stage of their education/ training.

We are, therefore, primarily committed to providing work experience placements to students from schools in the Oxford City Business in the Community cluster group or who are resident in the City OX1-OX4 postcodes in order to support and develop strong links with and meaningful opportunities for the diverse communities we deliver our services to.

The Council will still, wherever possible, consider all separate requests for work experience on a case-by-case basis when these align with our strategic objectives and derive a measurable benefit for local communities or innovative service development.

We would like to wish you well in your career development, but on this occasion cannot offer you a work experience placement.

Appendix 5: National best practice guidelines for work experience

High quality and effective work experience should be just that – a real life experience of the world of work, rather than just trying to keep someone occupied for a week or two.

Learners should complete the placement having had the chance to develop a range of transferable skills, gain useful contacts for networking, explore career options and make a positive choice about next steps into employment, as well as enhancing their CV.

Consider the agenda in advance, and the points you may wish to cover which could include:

- Progress against an overall objective and short-term goals;
- Which aspects of the placement are going well?
- Which aspects of the placement are more challenging, and is there anything which can be done to assist in this area?
- Review of expectations, if required;
- Feedback to the learner on both practical skills and general employability skills;
- Opportunity for the learner to feedback on practical or wider organisational topics which may be of interest;
- Opportunity to ask the learner to review a specific area of interest, e.g. their opinion of a key service from a young person's point of view;
- How to attract and recruit more young people with the skills and aptitudes required by the organisations, etc.
- Create a varied placement role, with opportunities to develop a number of areas of skills knowledge, to try and avoid monotony;
- Show a direct link from the work placement role to the wider business, to give some context to the role and show the learner how they fit in with the overall success criteria for the organisation;
- Try and build in a level of autonomy, giving the learner responsibility for a particular piece of work. Agreeing an overall objective and a series of tasks is helpful with this;

- Ensure that the activities within the placement challenge the learner. All learners will have unique needs, and the level of challenge will vary for different learners, requiring a tailored approach to placement planning

Review checklist:

- Review the learning points while they are still fresh;
- Reflect on the skills and abilities learned and ensure that these are highlighted within the CV;
- Consider whether career aspirations have changed in light of the placement;
- Identify any gaps in skills or knowledge needed to pursue the next step into a career of their choice (where this is possible);
- Encourage the learner to provide their own feedback, both on the work experience placement design and management, to assist with future placements, and also on areas of the organisation which would benefit from their view point;
- Write a reference, highlighting skills and knowledge they have learned whilst on placement within the organisation, and any transferable skills they have demonstrated;
- Provide assistance with CV writing, interview preparation and networking opportunities;
- Make available any information on opportunities within the organisation, such as Apprenticeships or other vacancies, and assist the learner in the application process; and
- Highlight positive achievements and thanking them for their time;

Appendix 6: 7 traits of successful placements

A brilliant work placement - one that works for you and the student - is easier to put together than you might think. Just keep it simple with a series of tasks that are within the student's abilities. You want them to leave with a sense of achievement and a few useful insights into the world of work. This is what you're aiming for: Work experience opportunities can vary in length, but for 14-16 year-olds typically take place over a taster day, a week or a fortnight. It may be more suitable for a busy business to offer a taster day to a student rather than a full week, and similarly some students may find a taster day an easier introduction to the workplace.

1. **More than admin.** Tea making and administration are both important - and we've all done them - but they're not enough to fill a meaningful work placement. The student needs to be involved with the day-to-day tasks performed in your business.
2. **Variety.** A placement that allows the student to meet people across the business or see a range of tasks performed will be a lot more interesting than one that doesn't.
3. **Teamwork.** Whatever you can do to make the student feel part of the team will be time well spent.
4. **What it's like to be the boss.** Even the most democratic business structures have bosses. Help the student understand how to behave around them by allowing them to sit in with someone senior for a period of time.
5. **Customers.** As learning exercises go, there's nothing quite like meeting customers and seeing first-hand what they expect when they hand over their cash.
6. **The bigger picture.** Help the student understand that your business is just one element of a network that includes suppliers, the local community and the national economy.
7. **Careers advice.** Once you've had a chance to size up the student and their skills, help them achieve their ambitions by sharing your experience and advice.