

## **Work Experience - Information for Parents**

Work Experience involves the student carrying out particular tasks or duties, more or less like an employee would, but with the emphasis on learning about working life from the experience.

Why do young people go on Work Experience?

- To gain an insight into the world of work
- To acquire employability skills
- To develop self-awareness and confidence
- To begin to understand the links between the UTCs subjects and the world of work
- To start appreciating the skills needed to succeed in the labour market

Prior to the student embarking on the placement, the student will be introduced to health and safety in the work place and both the student and employer introduced to opportunities for learning from the experience.

During the placement a responsible person from the UTC will visit the employer to check on the welfare of the student. Any concerns about the placement will be raised with placement co-ordinator based in the Local Authority. Several Acts of Parliament govern work experience, the main one being the Education (Work Experience) Act 1973. This Act states that “students on approved schemes of work experience are regarded as employees from a Health and Safety perspective but must not receive any payment.” The employer however can assist with expenses if they wish to.

Students obtain placements by either:

- Contacting an employer direct, which is known as a “self-placement”
- Being matched/helped by the UTC from the database of placements provided by Sheffield City Council’s Work Experience Co-ordinator.

In both cases, no student will be able to start a placement unless the Local Authority placement organisers or other third party have taken reasonable steps to satisfy themselves the employer/service have suitable risk management practices in place. This takes into account the quality of the placement and in particular the company’s risk management procedures. A young person will not be placed in an organisation that does not have Employers Liability Insurance or where the placement organisers are not satisfied the organisations risk management practices are suitable.

For this reason it is important the UTC is informed as soon as possible if a student has generated their own placement – please complete and return the enclosed form for self-placements.

### **Frequently asked questions:**

What if the placement does not match my child's career aspirations?

We aim to place your child in a working environment that best suits their personal preferences and long-term ambitions where possible. However, any work experience, irrespective of the occupation, can provide your child with the opportunity to acquire transferable personal skills that will be useful for the rest of their working life.

Why do students not receive any payment while on work experience?

By the 1973 Act of Parliament, work experience is required to be a learning process and the Act therefore prohibits payment. However, in some cases the employer may offer out of pocket expenses to provide travel or lunch.

Why does the Work Experience process have to start so early?

This enables the placement organiser to ensure they have enough time to satisfy themselves that the employer/service is offering a quality placement and have suitable risk management procedures and practices in place.

What if my child is unhappy?

Discuss the problem with your child and if following your advice your child is still worried then please contact their UTC.

What about health issues?

It is important that the UTC are made aware of any medical or other issues associated with your child so that they are not placed into an unsuitable environment and in some instances they will communicate this to the employer (with parental consent) to ensure your child's well-being.

### **How you can help your child:**

These are some of the ways you can help your child get the most out of work experience:

- Take an interest and help them find a work placement that they would like to do.
- Make sure that all forms and paperwork are returned quickly
- Help them to understand the goodwill shown by the employer offering the work placement.
- Help them to arrange and prepare for any interviews with the employer. It helps if they have thought about why they want to work in a particular workplace, and can come up with good reasons, if asked.
- It also helps if your child has done their homework about the company they are placed with. The company may have a website where you can find information.
- Help your child to be realistic about what to expect. They may well spend some time making the tea or helping with simple but essential administrative jobs such as filing or photocopying.
- Remind your child that if they find they don't understand how to do something they should always ask their designated supervisor.
- It is important to leave a good impression: a work experience student who is polite and helpful may be making contacts which will stand them in good stead later on.
- Ensure that your child attends the placement punctually
- Please make sure that both the employer and the UTC are notified if the student is unable to attend their work placement.
- Inform the UTC immediately of any difficulties experienced during the placement.

- Talk to them during the placement about what they are doing and how they are getting on and encourage them to complete their diary/workbook.
- Encourage your child to have a positive approach to the placement, even if it isn't quite what they expected.