

# Work experience placements.

## Schools Safety Guide

### Document information

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## Introduction

Work experience placements occur where schools provide work placements for young people from outside the school and where schools arrange placements for their students with other employers.

This guidance provides a simple overview of the health and safety factors schools need to consider in these situations.

## Legal perspective

When providing a young person with work experience opportunities employers have the same responsibilities for that young person's health, safety and welfare as they do for their employees.

The law also requires employers to ensure that young people at work are not exposed to risks due to their lack of experience, lack of awareness of risks and their potential immaturity, both physically and mentally.

In legal terms a young person is anyone under 18 years of age.

## Roles

- **Placement providers** – are companies and organisations (which include schools) etc., that offer work experience placements (placements). In this context, placement providers have the primary (employers) responsibility for the health and safety of students on placement. Organisations providing placements must ensure their arrangements for health and safety, including their risk assessments cater for the risks to young people.
- **Work experience Organiser** – are schools and other educational establishments that arrange placements for their students. Organisers are required to undertake reasonable checks on placement providers to ensure the placement is safe. These checks are often carried out on behalf of schools by other organisations such as Education Business Partnerships or third party independent business's<sup>1</sup>.

## Young people at work

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to ensure that young people employed by them are not exposed to risk due to their:

- lack of experience;
- being unaware of existing or potential risks;
- lack of maturity.

In addressing these issues employers must consider the following factors:

- the layout of the workplace;
- the physical, biological and chemical agents they will be exposed to;

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<sup>1</sup> Where schools buy into an external service to organise and assess placements, schools retain the duty of care for students and the responsibility to decide if a placement is used.

- how they will handle work equipment;
- how the work and processes are organised;
- the extent of health and safety training needed;
- risks from particular agents, processes and work.

Employers also need to consider whether the work the young person will do:

- is **beyond** their physical or psychological capacity: this doesn't have to be complicated, it could be as simple as checking a young person is capable of safely lifting weights and of remembering and following instructions;
- involves **harmful** exposure to substances that are toxic, can cause cancer, can damage or harm an unborn child, or can chronically affect human health in any other way: be aware of substances a young person might come into contact with in their work, consider exposure levels and ensure legal limits are met;
- involves **harmful** exposure to radiation: ensure a young person's exposure to radiation is restricted and does not exceed the allowed dose limit;
- involves risk of accidents that **cannot reasonably be recognised or avoided** by young people due to their insufficient attention to safety or lack of experience or training: a young person might be unfamiliar with 'obvious' risks. An employer should consider the need for tailored training/closer supervision.
- has a risk to health from **extreme** cold, heat, noise or vibration: in most cases, young people will not be at any greater risk than adults and for workplaces that include these hazards it is likely there will already be control measures in place.

## What schools need to do when arranging placements for their students

### Planning for work placements

Successful work placements involve a number of stages:

- **Students and parents (or others with parental responsibility)**– schools should work with students and parents to identify information about students who might be at greater risk for example due to health conditions or learning difficulties as this may affect the type of placement they are offered.
- **Planning for placement** – before a student goes on placement, enquiries must be made of the placement provider to ensure they have arrangements in place for health and safety and that these arrangements cater for the risks to young people (see [Questions to ask of a placement provider](#)). Organisers also need to ensure providers are given information in advance about students who might be at greater risk for example due to health conditions or learning difficulties, so they can take these into account.

- **Monitoring, etc.** – schools must have systems in place to monitor, visit and support students while on placement; this must include arrangements for support outside normal school hours and attendance monitoring.

### **Questions to ask of a placement provider**

Schools should ask sensible questions to satisfy themselves that placement providers have health and safety arrangements in place and that these cater for young people.

Where Schools use third party work experience organisers to arrange placements, the school should work with them to ensure these questions are asked of employers.

Schools don't need to and shouldn't duplicate checks on employers by requesting them to do things twice.

The things that should be covered include;

### **General items**

- Does the provider have a health and safety policy outlining their health and safety policy statement, organisation of people and procedures?
- Does the policy include for the completion of general health and safety risk assessments?
- Does the policy include for the completion of specific risk assessments (where necessary) e.g. Manual Handling Operations, Hazardous Substances, Noise and Vibration, Asbestos, Display Screen Equipment, Fire?
- Are arrangements in place for the Induction, supervision and site familiarisation of young people?
- Are arrangements in place for students to raise health and safety concerns
- Ask the provider to supply a copy of their Employer's Liability Insurance

### **Risks to young people**

Check that the placement provider understands about the specific factors relevant to employing young people see [Young people at work](#) above;

### **The work placement**

Discuss the work the student will be doing/observing and the arrangements the provider will put in place to control the risks, keep the checks in proportion to the work environment;

- Low risk environments such as offices and shops with every day risks that will be familiar to the student simply speaking with the provider to confirm this should be enough
- Less familiar environments (packing light assembly work), talk to providers to find out what the student will be doing and confirm they have arrangements for managing risk. In addition to the general items above, this may need to include training, supervision, and any protective equipment that might be needed.

- For higher risk placements (construction, agriculture and manufacturing), discuss with the providers what work the student will be doing or observing, the risks involved and how these are managed. Remember that although the placement might be in a higher risk environment the work the student is doing and the surroundings they are working in may not be, for example it could be in a separate office.

**Remember**, it is not the work placement organisers job to do the risk assessment for the work the student will be doing/observing, this is the duty of the placement provider (employer).

### **Other issues to consider**

- Use past experience or shared experience with other schools for example. You do not need to repeat checks for a new student where an employer is known to you and has a good track record and the student's needs are no different to those on past placements.
- If you are looking at using an employer new to work experience talk through with them what students will do and what relevant precautions are required.
- Short term, low risk, regularly used placements may only require a simple generic review of the placement providers arrangements for health and safety, however extended placements, higher risk, or one-off placements will require a more in-depth student specific assessment.
- If the placement is longer than 10 days, it is good practice for the student's supervisor to have a DBS check.
- Don't seek additional paperwork for assurance purpose or seek to second guess the employers risk assessment or their risk control measure, you are unlikely to have knowledge to evaluate the assessment and it may give the false impression that you have approved it.
- Remember employers with fewer than five employees are not required to have a written assessment.

## **What schools need to do when providing a work experience placement**

Schools need to use their existing health and safety arrangements for assessing and managing the health and safety risks to young people. This requires schools to;

- Ensure your risk assessment caters for the risk factors for [Young people at work](#).
- Discuss the placement in advance with organisers. Take account of what they and their parents tell you of the student's physical and psychological capacity and of any particular needs, for example due to any health conditions or learning difficulties.

- Avoid repeating your assessment of the risks if a new student is of a broadly similar level of maturity and understanding as previous students and has no particular or additional needs (the organiser or parent should tell you if they have).
- If you don't currently employ a young person, have not done so in the last few years and are taking on a work experience student for the first time, or one with particular needs, review your risk assessment before they start.
- Keep any additional work to control risks in proportion to the environment:
  - Schools are generally considered low-risk environments, with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to the student, so your existing arrangements for other employees should be enough.

If students are placed in environments with risks less familiar to the them (e.g. design and technology workshops, site management activities,) you will need to make arrangements to manage the risks

In addition to the general induction, supervision and site familiarisation, and this may require specific training in the use of equipment, enhanced supervision and any protective equipment needed.

When you induct students, explain the risks and how they are controlled, checking that they understand what they have been told.

You may need to consider the **specific factors** that must be managed for young people, including exposure to radiation, noise and vibration, toxic substances, or extreme temperatures. See [Young people at work](#) above.

Where these specific factors exist in your workplace you should already have control measures in place. Consider whether you need to do anything further to control the risks to young people.

Check that students know how to raise any health and safety concerns.

## Restrictions

Employers need to ensure that young persons are protected from risks to their health & safety that are a consequence of: their lack of experience; their absence of awareness of existing or potential risk; or, the fact that they have not yet fully matured.

This places certain restrictions on the work they can be asked to do. There are also legal restrictions on the working hours of young people. See <https://www.gov.uk/child-employment/restrictions-on-child-employment> more information.

## Information to students/parental consent

Students and their parents (or those with parental responsibility) should be informed about any significant risks to the young person's health & safety and what measures

have been put in place to control these risks. They must also be made aware of any restrictions or prohibitions on the work they do. Information and instructions to students must be confirmed in writing.

Parental consent will be required before a student starts their work placement.

Students should be told about their responsibility to take care of their own health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by your actions whilst on a work placement.

This includes listening carefully, following instructions, using any safety equipment that has been provided, taking part in relevant training and raising any concerns about their health and safety, with the placement provider or organiser and telling them about any accidents or illness which they have that are work related.

## Further information

Please contact the health & safety team if you require further information on Work Experience.

Further information on young people and work experience is also available on HSE's website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/workexperience/>