

A black and white photograph of two women sitting at a table, looking at a document together. The woman on the right is wearing a grey hoodie and a watch, and is holding a pen. The woman on the left is wearing a striped shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window with curtains.

Offering meaningful work experience:

a guide for adult social care employers

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Introduction

A guide for adult social care employers

Work experience can bring lots of benefits to adult social care employers, and give people who are interested in joining our sector the opportunity to experience what it's really like.

This ensures people have realistic expectations about working in social care before they apply for a job, which can help you to stem the flow of wasted resources in recruiting people that aren't going to stay.

This guide has practical information and templates to support adult social care employers to provide meaningful work experience.

It's for anyone responsible for supporting people on work experience, whether they are a manager, supervisor, mentor or an individual employer.

What is work experience?

Work experience takes place in the workplace and allows people to experience what it's like to do a job, whilst being supervised by people who already work in the environment.

Work experience can vary from 'taster days' to programmes that run over one or two weeks, a few months or a year. Work experience placements could offer hands-on experience, observation or work shadowing.

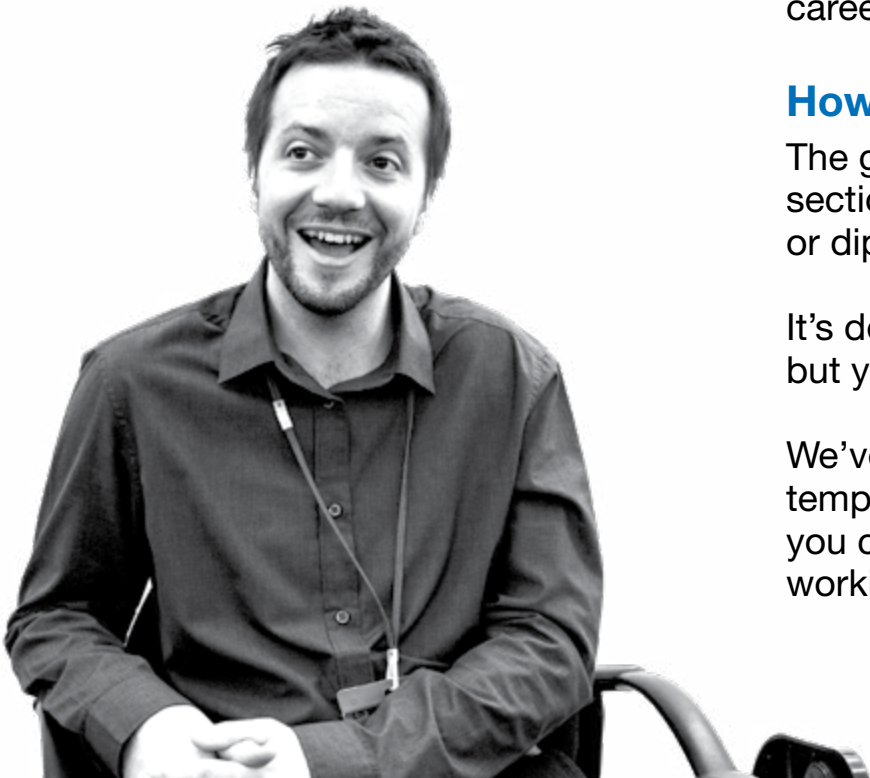
All of these can provide a valuable experience for people looking for a career in the adult care sector.

How to use this guide?

The guide is split up into different sections so you can read it in full, or dip into different sections.

It's designed to be used online, but you can also print copies out.

We've also provided some useful templates within this toolkit which you can personalise to suit your working environment.



Why offer work experience

There are lots of benefits to offering work experience

It can help you recruit and retain workers with the right values and behaviours

Providing work experience can help you to connect to people that want to work in social care. It gives you the chance to see if they have the right values and behaviours to work in your organisation, before you offer them employment.

It also gives people the opportunity to make informed decisions about whether or not a career in social care is right for them. This will help make sure there are fewer 'wrong choices' and you get the right people for the right roles, which can reduce your recruitment costs and your turnover rates.

It can help you build links in your local community

Offering work experience can help to connect with your local community, such as schools, colleges, Jobcentre Plus and other community groups.

This can create a positive image of you as an employer, and boost your profile as a good employer.

It can help you employ people who can bring a different range of experiences

Your work experience could be part of a pre-employment programme to support local recruitment initiatives.

These might target specific 'hard to reach' groups, or groups that are under-represented in your workforce such as males, disabled people or the long-term unemployed.

It can help you develop and motivate existing staff

You could ask existing staff to get involved in mentoring, buddying or training as part of the work experience, which can build their skills.

Bring you fresh ideas

By reaching out to new people, it could help you to understand new ways of doing things.

For example young people can bring energy, passion and a fresh perspective to your organisation. Whereas adults can bring their life skills and experiences from a range of backgrounds.

learn

from others

Case study

Offering work experience at Borough Care

Borough Care work with local colleges and Jobcentre Plus to support people interested in work in social care, to do work experience. This helps them to gain an honest insight into the challenging but rewarding world of working in a care home.

Borough Care supports older people in Stockport. They're passionate about supporting people who are interested in working in social care, to have a meaningful work experience. This helps them to really understand what it's like to work there before applying for a job with them.

The work experience they offer is diverse and importantly, tasks are shaped around the person's interests, skills and capabilities to ensure they're engaged and motivated.

Shadowing is a key activity within all placements because they feel it enables people to explore how the organisation works and develop their knowledge.

They encourage placements to interact with people who access care and support as much as possible – this helps them understand how the colourful characters and their exciting stories make care so rewarding. They might do things like serving tea and cake or helping the activity and lifestyle facilitator with activities such as chair basketball or karaoke.

They've learnt that while some people are self-starters, others need prescribed activities to keep them engaged in the placement. Younger individuals find this particularly useful, as they sometimes lack the communication skills to ask for further tasks.

Borough Care celebrate diversity and welcome work placements for individuals of all ages and backgrounds. They find people for work experience through the local college and Jobcentre Plus, who refer suitable candidates to them.

They invite all work placements to attend the 'Welcome to Borough Care' session – this introduces them to the organisation, explains what they'll be doing and what's expected of them. They also enrol onto the 'My Learning Cloud' portal to do e:learning.

The organisation monitors people regularly throughout their work experience. Where possible, they encourage home managers to enter into continuous dialogue and always encourage an exit interview or discussion at the end of the placement.

Offering work experience has developed the skills of Borough Care's existing staff who support placements through mentoring and coaching.

1 Get buy-in

Before you begin make sure offering work experience will work for you, whether you're an individual employer or an organisation.

You'll need to make sure you're able to support someone on work experience (people and money).

You'll also need to get buy-in from people who might come into contact with the person on work experience. For example if you're an organisation this could be front line care staff, catering staff, reception, maintenance and people who access your service. If you're an individual employer this might be other personal assistants and family members.

Involve staff in the planning process

You could do this by involving them in the planning process and ask their opinions about:

- **when's the best time to host the placement – are there key times of the year/week/day when your team don't have capacity to support work experience**
- **the logistics of the placement - who'll be involved and what tasks they could do**
- **any concerns or issues they have.**

Find a champion

This could be someone who did work experience themselves and supports the programme and sees the real benefits.

Write a work experience policy

This could include the business case for offering work experience, and outline the key points of the work experience.

2 Plan your work experience

Every work experience is different, so tailor it to suit the individual's needs and your business needs.

Good quality work experience placements are:

- purposeful, relevant and really challenge the person to think about their career goals and abilities
- planned and supervised so that the time is well spent
- clear about the roles, responsibilities and expectations
- reviewed at the end, with feedback on performance.

Quality principles for offering work experience

Here are some principles you should follow when designing a work experience placement. As an employer, you should:

1. include people who access care and support in the planning and decision making around work experience
2. get consent from people who access care and support who'll come into contact with work experience students. If they don't have the capacity to provide consent you should ask their family, carers or advocates
3. ensure that 16 and 17 year olds are effectively supported and supervised whilst on work experience
4. make the outcomes of the work experience, and any training or qualifications, clear to learning providers and learners
5. ensure that your workplace (and staff) demonstrate high quality, person-centred care and support
6. understand the needs of learners and ensure that you're able to meet them
7. ensure that the total amount of time spent on work experience should reflect the level of competence expected of the learner at the end of the programme
8. ensure that the work experience is a substantial length for the expected outcomes
9. give learners time to reflect on their development throughout their placement.

Considerations for work experience

Who will run the work experience programme?

There are two main responsibilities.

The coordinator

The coordinator will be from the school, college or training provider. They'll coordinate the work experience programme including:

- organising the logistics of the programme
- liaising with the learner and the employer.



The supervisor or mentor

They'll help those on work experience with the practical things in the workplace, including:

- welcome and introductions
- supporting with everyday tasks
- giving feedback throughout the placement.



This is a good development opportunity for existing staff so you might want to have more than one supervisor or mentor. It could link in with those who may be doing an apprenticeship or qualification.

Also think about:

- will existing staff involved in the programme need training?
- will they have time set aside away from normal duties?



What role will they be doing?

Remember, people who do work experience want to be given as much insight as possible into the world of adult social care and be involved in real tasks.

Think about:

- **what tasks and activities they'll be involved in – or could you offer them a one-off project**
- **a plan or schedule that summarises everything**
- **other opportunities to help them learn more about your organisation and adult social care.**

Work experience tasks and activities

Work shadowing is a good place to start, however, where possible, try and set real life tasks or projects for people to get involved in.

For example:

- **assisting with social activities**
- **shadowing a care worker as they record notes in a care plan**
- **general tidying in an area**
- **observing routine procedures**
- **supporting to serve food and drinks**
- **talking to people who access care and support**
- **update communication materials such as your website, leaflets or noticeboards.**

They might also support with other tasks:

- **accompany someone on a trip into the town, with another member of staff.**
- **supporting someone to use digital equipment e.g. a tablet.**

How long will the work experience be for?

Think about what you're trying to achieve from the work experience, and what will work best for you and your staff.

Shorter work experience programmes can be easier to organise, whereas longer work placements can provide continuity.

How will you evaluate the work experience?

It's important that those visiting your workplace have a positive experience, and you should capture feedback to support and develop your programme.

Think about how you'll get feedback from the placement, and how you'll give them feedback about their work.

How will you communicate with people coming on work experience?

It's important that people know what to expect before coming on work experience, and they know when and how to start.

You could arrange a pre-meeting or telephone call before they start to go through some of the main things they need to know.



3 Promote your work experience and find placements

Who's your ideal placement? Think about who's your ideal work experience placement and target your promotions to them.

Who do you want to apply?

You might want to attract certain people to your work experience.

This might be people who are currently under-represented in your workplace, or as part of a local initiative you're working with.

For example:

- **local residents**
- **young people or students**
- **employed adults who are considering a career move**

- **adults who are looking for work after a period of unemployment**
- **people who are under-represented in your workplace such as males, disabled people or older workers**

Or you might want to leave applications open to anyone who's suitable.

When you know who you want to apply, think of the best ways to reach them.

What do you want them to be like?

Think about what's important to you as an employer and what you look for in your employees – these are your workplace values and behaviours.

Include them in your advertising so that people know what you're looking for.

You could share some of your values in your adverts by saying 'do you

share these values?' or you could share your values as a catchy headline such as 'are you caring, reliable and friendly?'

We have practical tools and templates to help you identify workplace values, and embed them in your application process.

Visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values.

Promoting your work experience

Here are some of the ways you can promote your work experience.

- **Word of mouth and referrals**

Your staff are your best advert! If you offer work experience, they could refer friends and relatives who are suitable for the role.

- **Contact local schools and learning providers**

Schools and training providers are required to offer work experience opportunities so they should be happy to help.

[*I Care...Ambassadors*](#) is a great initiative to help you build these links. As an ambassador you could also attend a careers or jobs fair, do a presentation or an interactive activity to promote your work experience.

- **Work with local organisations**

such as Jobcentre Plus, Prince's Trust or local independent living organisation (user-led or direct payment support organisation)

These organisations can help you identify people for work experience, who have the right values and behaviours.

They'll usually work with you to offer work experience tailored to your workforce needs, and might provide additional training or pay travel costs for people on placement.

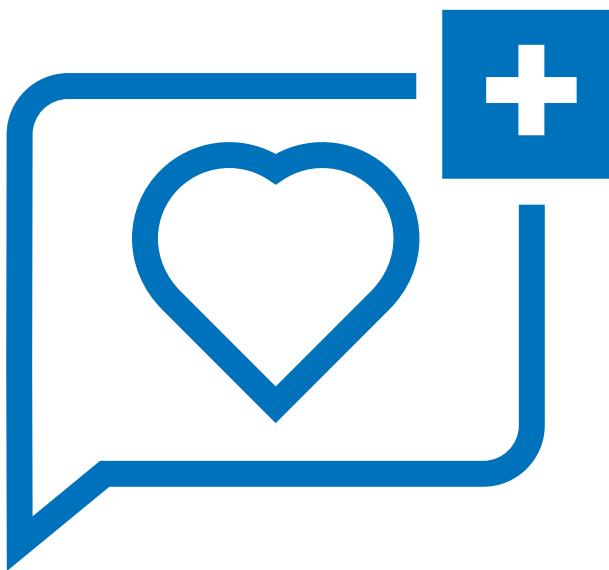
- **Get involved in local pre-employment or supported employment initiatives**

These initiatives often support people into work, and usually include an element of work experience.

Some initiatives might focus on supporting people from hard to reach groups, or those who are under-represented in the local workforce, into work. This could include males, young people, older workers, ex-veterans, disabled people, care leavers and ex-offenders.

- **Advertise on your website and social media**

Tell people on your website and social media that you offer work experience. You could put it on your vacancy page and advise people who want to work in social care but don't feel they have the experience yet, to apply.



Case study

Working in partnership with your local college to offer work experience

Expect Ltd worked with their local college to run a work experience programme in exchange for training for their staff. They drew up an agreement that the college would deliver an Access to Higher Education Diploma for staff, in return for Expect supporting level 2 and 3 health and social care students to do work experience.

As a result, Expect saw some great benefits. It's been a great way to find new talent, motivate and develop existing staff and helped them build long lasting links in the community.

Expect face challenges with their recruitment and retention, particularly with their frontline care and support staff. To help them find new recruits, keep existing staff and boost workforce morale they set up this agreement.

As part of it, they offered work experience to students over the age of 18 who were studying a Level 2 and 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care.

Their learning and development manager delivered 'briefing sessions' at the college that introduced the placement. The college then selected suitable students and did standard checks, including DBS checks, before referring students.

When students started with Expect they did an induction and were given a tour around the service and introduced to people who access care and support, the staff team and relevant managers.

Students worked alongside existing staff across the different care settings. They got involved in typical day to day tasks including delivering activities, record writing, food preparation and trips out.

Between 2016 and 2017 and 23 students passed the work experience. It led to a new workforce supply stream direct from the college, and a number of new level 2 and 3 health and social care qualified workers applied for roles with Expect.

Expect has found work experience to be a great way to find new talent. Their community presence increased and they developed strong links with the local college that still exist today.

[Read the full case study here.](#)

These new recruitment streams are full of fully qualified staff that have already been observed by your organisations service users, workforce and management during their placement. They know you and you know them.

4 Recruit the right placements

Have a clear process about how people can apply, and how they're selected.

Application

There are different ways you could ask people to apply. You might use an application form, hold an open day or ask people to attend a jobs fair.

Some people applying for the placement might not have previous experience or relevant qualifications. Make sure that your application process explores their values and why they want to work in social care.

You might receive more applications than you have available. Make sure your application process helps you to determine who to offer placements to.

It might include:

- **questions to enable you to make an assessment of the applicant, for example why they want the placement and what are their values**
- **consent from a parent, school or training provider if they're under 18**
- **what subjects they're studying or want to study if they're a student.**

Values-based recruitment

This approach involves matching candidates underlying values to those of your organisation. It ensures that you find the right staff to deliver high quality care and support, who understand the right and wrong ways of working.

It means that in your recruitment process, you explore candidates values rather than focusing on their past experiences and qualifications.

Taking this approach can help you recruit workers who perform well and are more likely to stay.

Find out more and download resources to help at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values



Inform successful candidates

When you inform successful placements, make sure they're aware of what you expect from them. This ensures that from the first day, they'll turn up with the right attitude, expectations and are dressed appropriately.

Write a letter of agreement which includes:

- **key information about the placement**
- **your expectations of the placement**
- **health and safety**
- **how to behave.**

Here's a checklist to help

Information about the person coming on work experience

- Name, address and telephone number
- Name and contact details of the teacher, careers or employment advisor (if applicable)
- Any particular needs or circumstances that you should be aware of (for example accessibility or dietary requirements)

Information about your organisation and workplace

- Name, address and telephone number
- Brief description of the type of care and support you offer

Information about the work experience

- Name and telephone number of supervisor or mentor who they should report to on the first day
- Where to go on the first day and what time to arrive
- What to wear and what to bring with them (for example will they need a uniform)
- What their hours of work will be, including information about breaks and if they need to provide their own lunch
- Brief details about their role and types of tasks and activities they'll be involved in
- Details of any rules, policies and procedures they must be aware of

5 Before the work experience begins: important information

Here's some important information you need to know before the work experience begins

Learners over 18 years of age undertaking vocational placements in health or social care settings are likely to require an enhanced and barred list check. Whatever the level of check the learner requires, providers are expected to undertake them following a risk assessment.

Providers should risk-assess the roles and responsibilities to determine which checks are appropriate and to what level. Providers must be able to show that they have undertaken this risk assessment, especially if they have decided not to undertake a check.

The check may be obtained by the educational establishment at the start of the course, but the health or social care provider should obtain written confirmation of this. We expect written confirmation to state which level of check the learner has had and whether it is satisfactory. Providers are ultimately responsible for the safety and wellbeing of people in their care and should assure themselves that the checks are satisfactory and the person is not barred.

See CQC's guidance on [DBS checks and work placements in adult social care settings](#). The minimum age at which someone can apply for a DBS check is 16. However, for learners aged under 16 on work experience a risk assessment needs to be carried out to carefully consider what roles and tasks would be appropriate for them and what level of supervision would be required.

More information from the Government's Disclosure and Barring can be found at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service



Insurance

Individuals on work experience are covered by your existing employers' liability insurance policy, provided your insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers.

The Association of British Insurers, the British Insurance Brokers Association and Lloyds of London have agreed that, as a matter of convention, individuals on work experience placements should be treated as employees for the purposes of insurance against bodily injury (that is, they'll be covered by your employers' liability policy), where the employer is legally liable for a loss.

You only need to notify your insurer of the sorts of activities that individuals on work placement will undertake if those activities are onerous or different from the normal business activities of your organisation.

For work experience placements that last longer than two weeks, there should be no problem but you may need to provide more detailed information to your insurer.

For more information visit the [Association of British Insurers](#).

Health and safety

There are very few work activities someone on work experience cannot do due to health and safety law.

However as an employer, you have primary responsibility for the health and safety of the individual and the people accessing your service and managing any significant risks.

You can do this by:

- **explaining the risks during induction, checking that they understand what they have been told and know how to raise health and safety concerns**
- **ensuring your checks are proportionate to the environment the person on work experience will be working in.**



Employing young people

There are activities that all young people are legally prohibited to do.

You 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. We'd suggest that you ask all those applying for work experience to complete a health questionnaire.

This information can then be used to make an informed assessment about their ability to experience particular roles.

- **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 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. You should consider the need for tailored training or 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's likely there will already be control measures in place.

A young person must never carry out work involving these risks, whether they're permanently employed or under training such as work experience.

Risk assessment

We expect providers to undertake a risk assessment before taking young people on work experience. The assessment should carefully consider what roles and tasks would be appropriate for them and what level of supervision would be required.

Payment and hours for young people

If you take on a young person who is of compulsory school age for a short-term work experience, you don't need to pay them for their time.

You're not required to pay for their travel, lunch or other refreshments.

However, if you do wish to cover any of these you must only contribute to their expenses, which should be limited.

You may wish to cover expenses for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and in these circumstances there may be local funding opportunities.

Work experience should adhere to the working time regulations and you should follow the policy you have in place. There's additional regulation for young people and they should not:

- **work more than eight hours per day, with a maximum of 37.5 hours per week**
- **work weekends**
- **start work before 7.00am**
- **finish work after 7.00pm**
- **work overtime**
- **work more than five days in seven.**

Young people are not allowed to work for more than four hours without taking a break of at least an hour.

For more information about the status of those undertaking work experience placements, visit the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy guidance on [Minimum wage: work experience and internships](#).



Safety and confidentiality

The safety and confidentiality of the people you support must be maintained throughout the work experience.

Use your own discretion and judgement when choosing what tasks and activities work experience placements do – especially where you have vulnerable people.

Include your confidentiality procedures in the placement agreement letter and during induction. Take into account their level of understanding, particularly if they're under the age of 16.

You should also ensure that safety and confidentiality issues are addressed in the risk assessments for work experience.

If there is any disclosure of information you should consider dismissing them from the premises and, if necessary, consider further action.

Whilst the person is on work experience, you should introduce them to the people who access care and support, and ask them to give verbal consent for them to observe any care, treatment or procedure. It might be better to gain this consent when the person on work experience isn't there.

Home visits

Home visits can be part of work experience if this is the service you offer, as long as you consider the risks.

Those on work experience may accompany staff on home visits provided, for example:

- **it is a follow up visit to a known person who accesses care and support**
- **the person has given prior consent to them attending**
- **the member of staff is satisfied that the person on work experience can demonstrate behaviour would be appropriate (a home visit would not be the first activity timetabled with a work experience placement).**

You should record the mitigating factors in a risk assessment.

6 Induction

Make sure everyone on work experience gets a thorough induction so they settle in quickly and learn about working life.

The most important things about the induction are to:

- **get to know the person**
- **set the expectations around their conduct and behaviour**
- **allow them to ask questions.**

A good induction should include:

- **an introduction to your business and the key contacts**
- **the expectations of behaviour, including dress code**
- **a tour of the facilities, including where to get food and drinks, where the nearest toilets are, any infection control, first aid facilities and where the fire exits are situated (and any evacuation procedures) as well as health and safety information they need to know (this is a legal requirement)**
- **a reiteration of service user confidentiality**
- **a clear outline of what they'll be doing during their time with you**

- **a plan or schedule for the individual's time in the work place, clearly outlining what they are doing each day (for example, where they will be and who to meet, and so on)**
- **an encouragement to those on work experience to prepare for their placement. Ask them to think about what they want to learn and what questions they might have.**



7 Deliver work experience

Work plan

A work plan with help people on work experience see what they'll be doing each day.

[Download a template work experience plan.](#)

Ongoing supervision and reflection

Ensure that there's a named person who has time from their normal work to support and supervise the person on work experience.

It's also good practice to have a couple of more formal feedback meetings – for example mid-way through and at the end of the placement.

You might also want to ask them to fill out a workbook throughout the placement. This will help them to reflect on their experience and understand their skills.

[Download a template workbook.](#)



Feedback and references at the end of the work experience

At the end of the work experience you should review how it went. You should ask how it was for them, what they liked best, what they learned and if there was anything that made them feel uncomfortable. You could capture this on an evaluation form.

[Download a template evaluation form.](#)

You could also give them a certificate for completing the work experience, and offer to be a referee on future job applications.

[Download a template certificate.](#)

Further support

If you have the capacity, you could help people improve their CVs and interview technique at the end of their work experience.

Recruitment

If you have a vacancy and the work experience has been successful, you can offer the person a job.

If you don't have an immediate vacancy but would consider employing them in the future, you could encourage them to stay in touch.

8 Evaluate the work experience

Evaluating your work experience means you can monitor and improve the work experience

To do this you could:

- **ask those on work experience to complete a survey which you can review**
- **meet with your local school, training provider or community group to review your work experience offer**
- **speak to staff and people who access your service who were involved in the work experience to see what they think.**



Forms and templates

Here are some forms and templates to use in your own work experience programme

1. Work experience policy

This provides an outline for your work experience policy and associated business case.

[Download here](#)

2. Application form

A standard form for work experience applicants.

[Download here](#)

3. Placement agreement

This is the agreement between you and the person on work experience. It sets out your expectations and requirements.

[Download here](#)

4. Health questionnaire

A confidential health questionnaire that asks all the questions necessary for you to determine any health risks to the individual on placement or your patients. The questionnaire is often sent out at the same time as the application form.

[Download here](#)

5. Risk assessment

This is a standard risk assessment that covers all the major risks. Additional risks can be added for specific areas.

[Download here](#)

6. Induction checklist

Have you covered everything in induction? This checklist will help you.

[Download here](#)

7. Work experience plan

This form asks the supervisors/mentors to set out what the work experience will entail for each day.

[Download here](#)

8. Workbook

This provides a sheet for completion each day for those undertaking work experience. It encourages them to consider what they want to achieve and reflect on their experiences.

[Download here](#)

9. Certificate

Something for those on work experience to take away.

[Download here](#)

10. Evaluation form

To evaluate your programme.

[download here](#)



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