



A guide to engaging and training volunteers for supporting workplace experiences

Modern work experience.

Let's make it work.

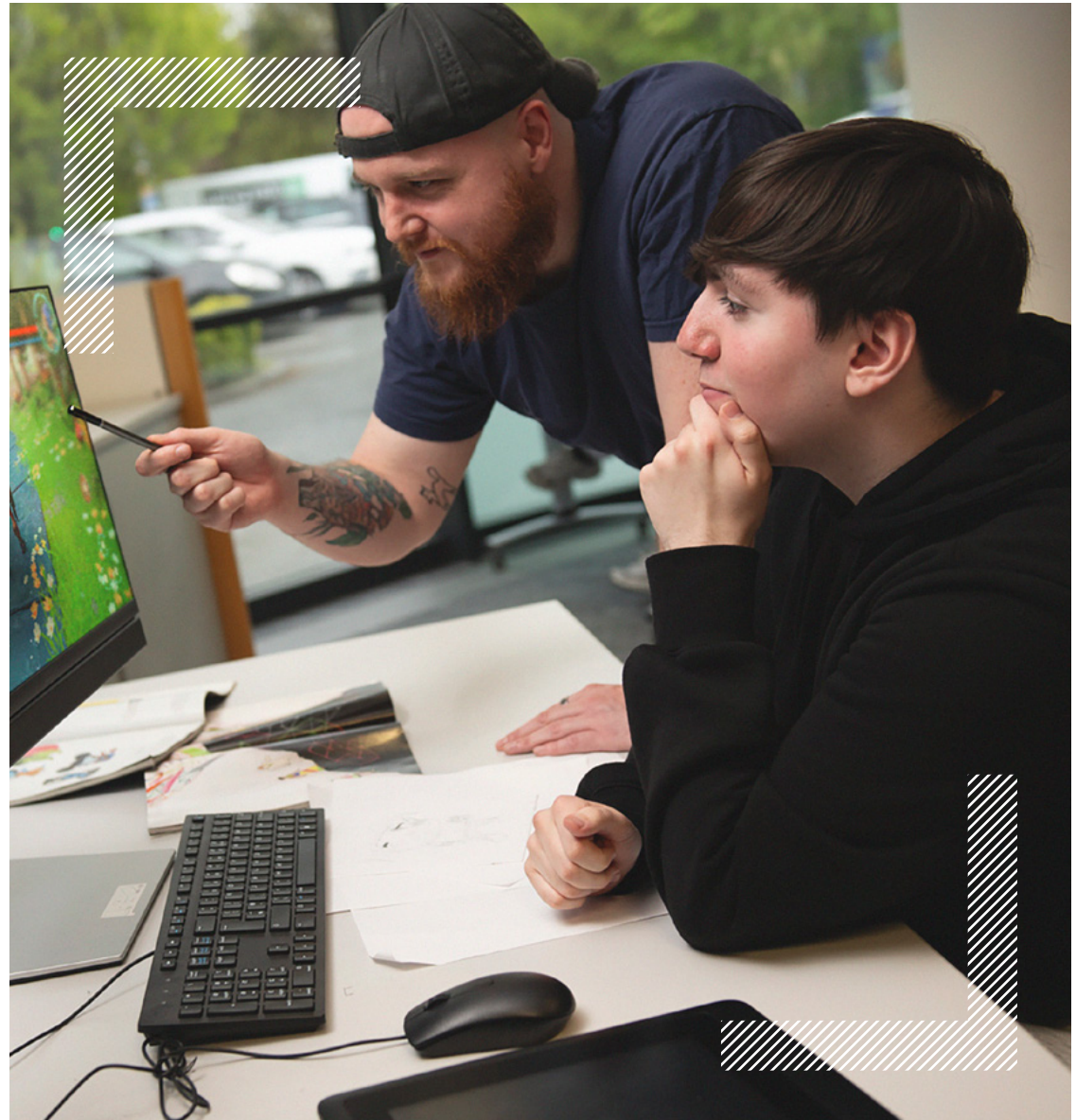


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Workplace experiences introduce young people to what the modern workplace looks and feels like, inspiring them to find out more. Through high quality workplace experiences, with meaningful employer engagement, young people build the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for their next steps.

Workplace volunteers play a key role in supporting young people on work experience - whether that be contributing to a two hour insight visit, supporting a group activity or supervising/buddying a longer placement.

This guide is designed to help you to engage and train volunteers in your organisation so that they can support workplace experiences to be the best they can be.



Engaging volunteers

Define the opportunity and roles

Clearly outline the opportunity. Include details on:

- personal benefits – e.g. skills development such as leadership or project management, aligned to your organisation's values.
- tasks involved – are you looking for coordinators/facilitators, buddies, mentors, expert speakers or a mix of all of these.
- expectations – e.g. time commitments, such as pre-workplace experience preparation as well as on the day/s, and feedback requirements.
- impact for young people – provides an opportunity to build knowledge, skills and behaviours, leading to greater confidence. Young people who have four or more encounters with the world of work are 86% less likely to end up NEET (not in employment, education or training).

Consider your ideal volunteers

How can you:

- ensure a variety of relatable role models? (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, class, accent, disability, neurodivergence – this will help young people see themselves in your sector.)
- include a mix of employees across different departments and seniority levels, with a variety of skills and experience?
- link volunteering to any Learning & Development needs identified in volunteer's HR processes?
- secure buy-in from others (e.g. line-managers) to ensure volunteers can commit?



Training of volunteers

Mode of training

- Depending on the size, geography and culture of your organisation you may decide to run in-person, live online or pre-recorded training sessions.
- Pre-recording allows you to offer flexibility and break the training into components, this can be particularly useful if you have repeat volunteers as you can direct them to relevant parts that may have been updated.
- You may wish to provide written materials or slides in additional to verbal training. Some organisations even publish a 'buddy guide'.
- Some organisations use the chance to share an 'Ambassador Pack' outlining some key facts about your organisation, details of early career entry routes and reminders (e.g. being comfortable to say 'I don't know' rather than sharing incorrect information).

Think back to your first day in the workplace: How did you feel? What questions did you have? Be aware that learners may be feeling very nervous and lacking in confidence, they may feel too nervous to ask questions, particularly in the beginning. It's important that they're supported and encouraged to be curious.

Top Tip: check for jargon and acronyms. Learners won't be familiar with terms like HR, Firm, GDPR, R&D

Content

This could include:

- Background to your programme, why you are offering work experience (business case and/or societal rationale).
- What the programme entails including how/when it will be run and who will be involved.
- The role/s for volunteers and why their involvement is key. This is a good time to flag the importance of ensuring they can honour their commitment (and line-manager authorisations required) and flag expectations around how drop-outs/withdrawals need to be handled (e.g. some organisations mandate that volunteers must find a replacement if they need to withdraw with less than 2 weeks notice). You may wish to highlight the organisational cost of withdrawals in terms of staff time to arrange cover and/or reputational damage in the local community if a placement needs to be cancelled.
- Logistics and signposting
- FAQs (keep a record of any questions that emerge for future sessions)
- Top tips (e.g. do you have an internal comms channel 'chat group' where volunteers can ask questions and get peer to peer support). Collecting top tips from previous workplace experiences supervisors/buddies can be a great way to personalise the approach in your organisation.
- Safeguarding and H&S guidance specific to your programme (this may differ depending on the age and vulnerabilities of learners visiting, the policy of the institutions they are studying at, whether teachers are accompanying them and other factors). It's always good to remind employees not to share personal details, not to be alone with learners and where to go for help if they have a concern about a learner's welfare. For more information, please refer to the guidance available on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).
- What expectations you have about feedback – how will you capture volunteer perspectives – either for the benefit of the young person (e.g. as part of school/college learning logs) or so that you can improve your activities.



Getting the most from workplace experiences:

For your business	For the young person
Know your business objectives (e.g. building knowledge of different routes into your sector and raising awareness of different careers). (If you haven't thought about all the benefits that work experience might bring for your organisation, have a look at our business case resources)	Discuss learning outcomes with the school/special school/college. These will vary for each learner at each workplace experiences (e.g. understanding growth sectors, developing self-awareness, exploring roles). Personalised outcomes are about 'what success looks like for an individual' - this could be as simple as improving their confidence talking in group settings or helping them to consider the skills required in different roles to inform their decision making.

Tips:

- Having a buddy or consistent point of contact during a placement is an effective way of ensuring that a young person gets the most from the experience.
- Can you task the early careers talent in your organisation to assist in developing your approach. What was helpful for them, or what would they have liked to experience?
- Do you have a clear process for what to do if young people pull out on the day, what are your contingency plans?
- How can you capture lessons learned, and top tips?
- Begin with a pilot group of enthusiastic volunteers rather than trying to recruit everyone at once. Success stories from early volunteers will help attract others.
- Recognise and celebrate volunteers' contributions. Use early successes to build case studies and testimonials that help attract new volunteers.



Other considerations

In some organisations the selection and preparation of learners will be done by a central team, in others the volunteers will be responsible for this. If a volunteer's role includes this task, you may find it useful to share [this detailed checklist](#) and this guide to [administrative tasks](#) with them. For some quick tips, see below.

1. Planning the workplace experiences:

- Target learners who will benefit most from a workplace experiences, i.e those without their own networks, those from under-represented groups, or from less privileged backgrounds. You can work with your local [Careers Hub](#) to be connected to schools and colleges and once connected they will support you to find learners who could benefit most. You can find out about the proportion of learners on Free School Meals (FSM) via [this link](#) (even within a school that has a higher than average of learners on FSM it can be helpful to signal to your contacts that you are keen to specifically target those who may not otherwise have access to an opportunity like this).
- Consider travel – how far away is the learner's home or educational institution? Are there suitable travel routes? Can you assist with travel costs? Can you be flexible with start and finish times? Does the learner have caring responsibilities that may affect the times they can attend?
- What level of depth are you offering - is this experience part of helping to 'introduce and inspire learners about your sector/organisation? This may be ideal for younger learners who may not yet have made subject choices. Or is it a chance to 'investigate and explore' something they have developed an interest in? Perhaps it is aimed at a learners who have a career preference emerging and want the chance to 'apply & demonstrate' their knowledge. Find out more about these phases and the learning outcomes for each by speaking with your school contact or visiting [this page](#).
- Structure the workplace experience to ensure a variety of experiences, with time built in for reflection and review.

2. Before the workplace experiences:

- Ensure that you have the contact details of the learners if it is a longer placement of a few days or more, their emergency contact and that of the main point of contact at the schools/colleges. Store these in accordance with your organisation's GDPR policy.
- Ensure that the learners have confirmation of arrangements working with the main school/college point of contact. Introduce the main point of contact at your organisation and provide information about where to go and who to ask for on their first day. Also inform them about any dress code and offer to answer any questions.
- If you are hosting a group visit, ensure you have the contact details of the person who is accompanying learners on the day (this may not be the person who made the arrangements).
- Arrange any visitor access/ escorted pass to be ready for the first day.



3. During the workplace experience:

- Meet and greet the learners warmly, share key information such as toilet and kitchen locations (keep in mind that learners may not have had the autonomy to make their own tea & coffee before).
- Set expectations clearly, having agreed with the school/college any process for dealing with behaviour that does not align with your business needs.
- Encourage them to participate and ask questions - they may feel nervous, anxious and need support to build their confidence.
- Praise them when they've done a good job.
- Ensure regular check-ins with a buddy or key contact.
- Time should be set aside at the end of the workplace experience for you to discuss how the workplace experience went and gain feedback. Check that any paperwork agreed by your organisation, or the learner's school or college, has been completed.
- If appropriate, let them know about any further placement or internship opportunities that may be suitable for them.

Additional needs

Learners should have disclosed relevant information about neurodivergence, learning difficulties, reasonable adjustments and health conditions on their application forms or the school/college should have shared information on any adjustments needed for the group visiting. The school/ college should also arrange to discuss with you any needs or requirements the learner/s may have before the placement. The [detailed checklist](#) includes ideas for ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment.





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