

# Work-based learning – Offering young people the best opportunity

## So....why offer work-based learning?



Offering young people an opportunity to spend time in the workplace can provide huge benefits for a company.

- Attract young people to the workplace
  - In order to attract the right kind of employees, it is advantageous if applicants have a realistic understanding of what they can offer the business
- Showcase the business and industry sector
  - This can help develop better understanding of a work environment and the diversity of roles within the sector
- Development opportunities amongst current staff
  - Being responsible for inducting or mentoring a young person can be a very rewarding experience for a member of staff and can demonstrate valuable skills within the workforce
- Identify the skills required from the next generation of employees
  - Challenging young people and observing them in the workplace can help to identify what skills they have and how their studies link with the workplace

## How to offer work-based learning opportunities

Contact schools and colleges directly

Speak to DYW – they have links with young people and can identify possible candidates

Be responsive to young people approaching you directly

Attend careers fairs and events that showcase your business to young people

# It's all in the preparation.....

In order to ensure a positive experience for the young person, as well as full benefits for your organisation, make sure you prepare well.

## Prior to the placement

- Negotiate a suitable date and time for the work-based learning
  - be mindful of the demands on your business and don't over promise
  - it is better to offer a few days that are well-planned to allow a good experience, than to offer a longer opportunity which is difficult to keep interesting and relevant
  - you can determine what to offer in order to provide a good experience that fits into your work schedule
- Determine who will take the lead in arranging the work-based learning opportunity
  - who is available on the relevant days ?
  - consider someone who shows leadership skills and view this as an opportunity for them to gain a better understanding of the context of their own role, this can provide valuable CPD.
  - provide contact details to the young person so that they have a dedicated point of contact
- Plan a range of experiences and activities
  - think about what you want to show the young person
    - what does your organisation do ?
    - who is involved in all the relevant processes ?
    - what is the context of the work or service provided ?
  - decide what would provide the best experience
    - depending on your resources, you can offer anything from short-term shadowing to an independent project – see the section on 'providing a valuable experience'

## When the young person first arrives

- Be ready to welcome them into the organisation
  - they are likely to be nervous and it is helpful to make them feel comfortable
- Induct the young person
  - familiarise them with the building including the toilets, canteen and any other relevant areas
  - provide an overview of the organisation – what it does, who it deals with etc.
  - discuss any relevant company policies, such as health and safety, breaks, phone usage
  - inform the young person of the expectations on them – time-keeping, professional and attentive behaviour
- Ensure the young person knows how to contact you throughout the experience

## Provide a programme for the work-based learning

- This doesn't have to be detailed but should allow the young person to prepare for each experience
  - A brief table showing where they will be and what they will be learning is adequate

Monday am	Production unit	Observe the production process from start to finish	Jane
Monday pm	Quality Assessment	Work on the quality assessment of one aspect of the production process	Pete B

- If appropriate, provide some background information to set the scene for each area of work
- Consider listing outcomes that relate to the skills they will use or provide some questions which they can answer following the experience

# Providing a valuable experience

There are a huge number of options for how the young person could spend their work-based learning opportunity – any experience can be valuable !

You also need to consider how you can benefit from the experience offered

- are there particular areas of the business that you are looking to recruit into – exposing young people to these areas may help them understand the business better and attract applications
- what aspects of the business is less understood – if you are aware of misconceptions about what is involved, ask the young people to feed information back to their community
- are there simple tasks that you have wanted to do, but not yet put as a priority – these could provide unique opportunities for reviews or assessments conducted by young people, providing hands-on experience
- do you think the young person could offer insight or new ideas – if you are looking for fresh ideas or a new perspective, why not ask the young person to conduct some market research or join in with brainstorming

## **Embed the young person into the workforce**

- identify a specific job that could be learnt in a relatively short time
- pair them with an experienced member of staff, allowing them to observe as well as getting hands-on experience
- where possible, allow the young person to explain how prior learning links to what they are doing
- make sure the young person is aware of any new skills they have learnt or exhibited within the work environment

## **Expose the young person to as many aspects of the business as possible**

- allow them to shadow a number of staff throughout an entire process, from start to finish
- explain the links between different parts of the business
- make sure they understand the external stakeholders, such as suppliers and clients, involved in ensuring the success of the business

## **Give the young person a distinct project to work on**

- small scale, low risk projects can provide unique experiences and add value to the business
- be clear about what is expected and what help is available
- allow the young person to see the benefits of their work and potentially showcase it to others

# Reflection and capturing the benefits

A successful work-based learning experience can provide many benefits, but these need to be captured

- Get some feedback from the young person – it's a good idea to ask the student to write a brief report or presentation based on what they have learnt
- Ask the young person what they enjoyed, what worked and what didn't so that you can improve future experiences
- Consider whether the match between the young person and the experience was appropriate
  - did you offer an experience that was too intense or too basic ?
  - are you looking for young people with different skills ?