

How to Find a Work Experience Placement



Introduction

If you're a full-time learner aged 16-18, we can help you to gain a valuable work placement, either by helping you to find a suitable placement yourself, or by the College contacting local employers on your behalf. Please read through this booklet and make use of the information and guidance provided. Talk to us, as together we can find the best option for you.

As a general rule, the quicker you can source a placement the better chance you have of getting your first choice. Bear in mind though that companies may take a while to get back to you, as they are often busy.

Why is Work Experience Important?

Work Experience is an opportunity for you to experience the world of work, think about your future and possibly find a career that you might want to go for.

There are lots of ways that work placements can help you:

- **Better career decision making**

You'll get a taste of what a job or workplace is like, so you can see if you are interested in that kind of career.

- **Improved self-confidence**

Working with other people and performing tasks well in the workplace will build your confidence.

- **It strengthens your CV**

Work experience shows that you are enthusiastic and ready to work hard. Future employers, colleges and universities will be interested in any experiences that help you to stand out.

- **Gain new skills**

Getting to work on time, working alongside other people and understanding employer expectations will add to your knowledge and understanding of the workplace.

- **Connect with employers**

You'll meet people at work and you might attend meetings or events. Some of these contacts may provide you with a reference or help you in the future.

Ideally a placement should be for a minimum of 30 hours – requiring around 1 day per week over 5 or more weeks.

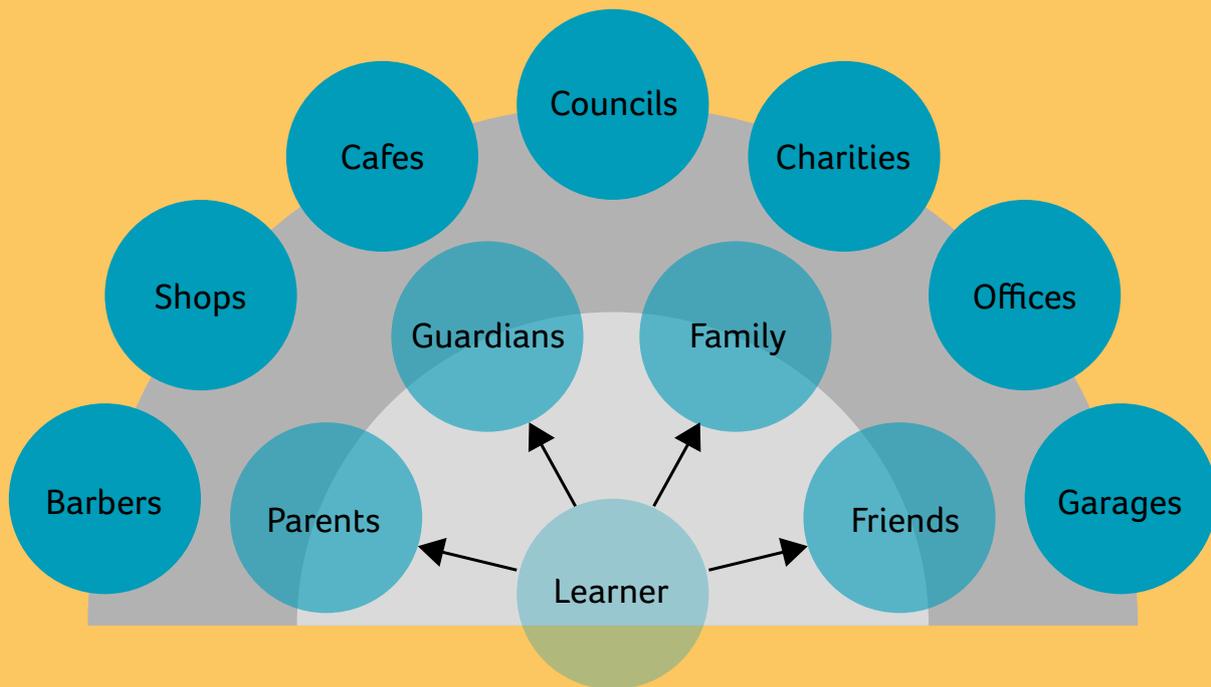


First Steps

The most important thing is to find an employer who is willing to offer you a placement. If you already know what sort of career appeals to you - Mechanic or Chef, for example - then this may help you to focus your search on garages or hotels and restaurants. If you just fancy a particular role - such as computing, administration or dealing

with customers - then your search can be much wider.

Discuss your options with family and friends, consider relevant advice, talk to your tutors and decide on the best options for you.



Things to Consider When Contacting Employers

Think about how you will approach the employer - will it be by email, letter, phone or in person? Whatever approach you take will need to be to a good standard to give yourself the best chance of being accepted.

You may want to drop in and talk to a company that is small and based in your local area. Larger companies are likely to require a letter and CV. We have provided a sample CV (see page 5), covering letter (see page 6) and some useful telephone techniques for you to consider when preparing your own (see page 7). Further guidance on 'Writing a CV' can be found on the College website. Always practise what you are going to say

at an interview, and get someone to check your spelling and punctuation for your CV and letter of application.

Before you approach a company it is important to consider how you are going to commute to get there - e.g. by walking, bus or perhaps a lift with a parent or carer - as you are expected to arrive each day on-time. The College does not subsidise or provide transport.

Remember: employers often take time out of a busy working day to provide a placement and they do not get paid for this service.

How to Find an Employer's Contact Details

Use online search engines (like Google) and social network sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), check out business directories (e.g. yell.com - listing local traders), visit the 'Contact Us' section of relevant company websites, consider companies on the high street, and ask relatives,

family friends and neighbours to talk to their contacts on your behalf. You are likely to need to approach more than one employer, as not every company will offer a placement. Don't get put off if some say no - just keep trying.

What to do Next if you Find a Work Placement Yourself

If an employer agrees to offer you a work placement, then please provide your main course tutor with the company name and contact details. The College will check that the employer has employer liability insurance and meets general Health & Safety requirements.

It's a good idea to send an employer a thank you letter or email, once you have been accepted for a placement. This will show that you are polite

and enthusiastic, and make a positive impression before you start.

When a placement has been confirmed you will not be able to change it, unless the placement is cancelled by the company.

If you are struggling to find a placement, then ask your tutor to liaise with the Work Experience Team so that they can consider alternative options.

What Will I be Doing on a Placement?

You will need to have realistic expectations of the likely duties you may be given, as you are only on placement for a short period of time and it takes time to acquire new skills. Most placements contain real, interesting work mixed with development tasks that introduce you to different parts of the company. You can also learn a lot by observing employees doing different tasks.

The duties you are able to carry out will vary; depending on the area of work you have chosen and how quickly you can develop the level of competence the employer is looking for. You will usually be expected to work 'normal working hours' for the business you are attending.

During the Placement

Dress code: You will need to wear appropriate clothing for the type of work you are doing - the company will advise you on this.

Maintain good manners: Always be polite, friendly and supportive - the company are giving up valuable time to offer you this opportunity.

Absences: If you are ill and not able to attend the placement you will need to call the employer to let them know.

Complete your 'Work Experience Learner Record' to show what you did, how you have developed, when you attended, and to gain employer feedback - all useful to use on your CV.

Please return your completed record to your course tutor.

Example CV

Jane Bloggs
123 Smith Street
Bolton
BL1 1BB
Telephone: 07979 123 456
Email: jane.bloggs@exampleemail.co.uk

Personal Profile

I am a reliable and hardworking young student with a keen interest in information technology. I enjoy all aspects of my studies, which cover learning how to use Microsoft applications in the workplace, file management and retrieval, undertake team-based projects and enterprise activity, and raise money for charity. My peers say that I am polite, approachable and easy to work with, and I also have a good sense of humour. My ambitions are to build on my qualifications and develop a successful career.

Education

Bolton College, Deane Road, Bolton BL3 5BG Sep 2016 - Present
IT BTEC Extended Certificate Level 2 (current)
English GCSE Grade C (predicted grade)
Maths GCSE Grade C (predicted grade)
BTEC units include: Spreadsheet & Word Development, Website Development, Digital Graphics & Animation, and Installing & Maintaining Computer Hardware & Software.

Name of school and address go here Sep 2011 - Jul 2016
Computer Science and IT GCSE Grade D
Physical Education Grade C
Additional GCSEs in English, Maths, Science and Geography

Paid & Voluntary Employment

Saturday Retail Assistant at Smiths & Smiths, Bolton Jul 2016 - Present
Key tasks include: advising and serving customers, restocking goods, maintaining tidy and attractive shop floor displays and assisting with deliveries.

Smiths & Smiths (1 week school work placement during Year 11) 8th - 12th Mar 2015
During my last year at school I successfully completed a one-week work placement with Smiths & Smiths. I assisted on the shop floor and in the administration office, and gained lots of practical experience. This helped me to secure a part-time retail assistant position when one became available after I turned 16.

Additional Skills

Customer Service Enterprise Certificate 2016

Hobbies & Interests

I am a keen tennis player and a member of my local club, where I participate in league and interclub competitions. I also help family members with administrative tasks – such as producing posters and newsletters for my mother's nursery business.

References are available on request.

Example Covering Letter

Jane Bloggs
123 Smith Street
Bolton
BL1 1BB
Telephone: 07979 123 456
Email: jane.bloggs@exampleemail.co.uk

Mrs Smith
Business Manager
Business Solutions
Bolton
BL3 3BB

1st February 2017

Dear Mrs Smith,

I am very keen to find a Business Administration work placement that is relevant to my studies and would enable me to gain valuable work experience, and I am writing to see if your company could provide me with a placement.

Having studied ICT at school, where I gained a GCSE D grade in July 2016, I progressed onto a Level 2 IT Extended Certificate at Bolton College last September. This course has really helped me to develop a broad range of IT skills - including using Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Microsoft packages, installing hardware and software, website development, digital graphics and animation – and I would very much like to use these skills in the workplace.

I am willing to be flexible in terms of working hours and can offer 30 or more hours for free, ideally one day a week, for 5 or more weeks, my preferred placement day being a Thursday. As I am based locally, commuting would not be a problem.

I've attached my CV for your consideration and very much hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Bloggs

Jane Bloggs

Guidance on Telephone Techniques

Find the employer's telephone number in the phone directory or via the web. Have a pen and paper close to hand, as well as your CV containing contact numbers and other useful information you may want to refer to. You should also know the dates when you are available for work experience and an interview, if required.

Example script for speculative phone calls:

Hello. Could you tell me please who would be the best person to speak to about doing a work experience placement with your organisation? (Write down the contact name).

Would it be possible to talk to him/her now?
Thank you.

[If no:] When would be a good time for me to call back? (Write down time) Thank you.

[If yes:] Hello. My name is... and I am a student at Bolton College. As part of our course, we have an opportunity to take part in work experience and I am wondering if it would be possible for me to work at your organisation. I am willing to be flexible in terms of working hours and can offer 30 or more hours for free, ideally one day a week, for 5 or more weeks (ideally on a Thursday).

[If no:] Okay. Thank you for your time.

[If yes or maybe:] Thank you. Would it be possible to make an appointment for me to come in and see you to discuss it?

[If yes – agree a date/time and write the appointment time, date and location details down].

I look forward to seeing you then.
Many thanks for this.

Possible Questions Employers May Ask

Employers may ask you some questions to find out more about you. Prepare answers for questions, such as:

Why do you want to do work experience with us?

What do you hope to gain from the placement?

What are your hobbies and interests?

What skills and qualities can you bring to the role?

What subjects did you enjoy most at school?

Why should the employer offer the placement to you?

What do you know about the employer's business or the role?

When are you able to start?





Bolton College
Deane Road Campus
Deane Road
Bolton
BL3 5BG

01204 482 036
business@boltoncc.ac.uk
www.boltoncollege.ac.uk

