

## **PART II: PLACEMENT PROVIDER**



### **WHAT IS IN IT FOR A PLACEMENT PROVIDER?**

As a placement provider, recruiting a young person can bring:

- Energy, enthusiasm and commitment –young people have plenty of energy and enthusiasm waiting to be channelled and those asking for placements have motivation, are committed to their future and want to learn.
- Skills and Perspective – young people will bring their own skills and viewpoints to the placement whilst being willing and ready to learn new ones from you and your team.
- Benefits For existing employees. Existing employees and the work culture as a whole will benefit from supervising work experience placements, growing team management skills and igniting passion through helping others. It is satisfying and rewarding.
- An adapted employer – hosting placements allows employers to become familiar with topics and approaches which may be needed for their current or future staff, such as supporting those with mental health challenges or additional needs.
- Helping others - placements can be invaluable for young people trying to take their first steps on the career ladder. It will give them both experience and a chance to try their hand in a number of industries and roles.
- Improved PR – supporting others can show your company in a positive light and stories can spread quickly through peer groups and communities.
- Recruitment – if the placement is a success, the young person may be able to come back to help at busy times or fill a vacancy in the future. If the young person is a good fit, it could lead to being offered employment.
- Funded support – those with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) may be supported into placements with funding bundles administered by the local authority or other organisations.

### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PLACEMENT PROVIDERS**

#### **Finding placement participants**

Some organisations find their main sources of referral come from parents and social media, but young people might approach them directly. As a placement provider, be open to encourage these routes. For example, be visual and 'warm' in your online presence.

Organisations may also be contacted by Jobcentre Plus, Youth Support Services or any of the many youth organisations in their area – try and develop

relationships with these organisations as they need regular and reliable placements which they can keep referring to over time.

Linking with formal initiatives, such as the National Citizen Service, The Princes Trust or through school trips for one-off or time-bound volunteering can help individuals know your organisation and feel comfortable to return for future placements.



### **What are you aiming for?**

It is key for placement providers to be clear on what they are looking for in a young person (age, time commitment, skill set etc).

Placements should be helped by support services and carers to understand and gain guidance on an individual – their skills, ability to mix with others and communicate as well as any ‘triggers’ to be aware of.

Consider the placement through an inclusive lens, for example, whether a job is physically active and therefore challenging for someone with a disability. Can you commit to creating more non-physically active roles?

### **Keep it casual and kind**

Empathy, approachability, a sense of humour are necessary building trust and relationships must be a priority not an afterthought.

Where possible, placement staff and youth workers should not be too formal, and should wear casual clothing. Many young people associate suits with traumatic appointments.

Being prepared to give adequate time is key. Whether this is directly with the young person in terms of setting them up and listening and supporting them, or separately in order to research what has come out of conversations (i.e. what their interests are, or why they have concerns).

A young person needs to be made aware that, although there are expectations for their behaviour, this is not formal education. They should know they are considered part of the team and ensure they know they are allowed to use the bathroom, get water (etc.) as needed.



### **Be developmental and supportive**

Show you have listened and understand the young person – for example repeating back what has been talked about with participant. Keep records of

key points from interactions and show how the process, whether an activity or training, has been able to address needs and be developmental.

Include conversations/signposting on how this placement fits with broader aspirations, for example discussion around what training might be needed to get their 'dream job' or next steps.

Have a qualification or certificate for people to work towards – even if this is not formally accredited. This can include a 'Certificate of Completion' for meeting the goals set out in a learning agreement. 'Digital Badges' are also a positive way of recognising achievements and skills learnt.



### **Placement format/length**

Placements can be flexible to suit your business and the young person. They can be anything from a short taster session or site visit, through to being a committed several week block of time, or an ongoing commitment of regular attendance each week/month.

Young people want placements to fit their existing commitments and it has been suggested that 2 hours a week is a convenient amount of time.

The value of taster sessions and workplace tours should not be underestimated. These help young people start to know if something is for them and what it entails, meaning gained experience of options, reduced anxiety and increased trust.

A non-rushed approach is often best, as this allows for a gradual build-up of involvement. For some young people it may be necessary to have a taster session, followed by two tasters the next week and so on. This allows for the building of confidence and trust, and the familiarisation with people. This is especially relevant for those with learning difficulties.

Placements should include variety so that young people can find the area/industry they are suited to or interested in – for example, one placement could include activities with a maintenance team, as well as administration and front of house customer service (. . . .but not too much too fast!).

All placements should make efforts to understand the young person's goals and be tailored to their interests where possible. However, certain organisations keep 'bespokeness' as their guiding principle for support.

## Your team



The young person will require some staff resource dedicated to them such as supervision and training. The amount of resource needed will depend on the individual and the placement and should be established as part of initial expectation management.

Especially for the initial period where close support is necessary, it is essential that any mentors or key support personnel do not change, for matters of consistency. Stability builds trust and it is essential.

The ongoing aim is to support individuals to feel a part of your team and to be comfortable to use their own initiative. This can be achieved with a clear plan for knowledge sharing, shadowing and training which will allow young people to pick things up quickly and soon be able to manage the tasks assigned without supervision.

Individuals external to your organisation should be considered part of your team – such as support workers, referral agencies or even parents and carers. Having a mentor involved in the ‘handover’ into a new environment allows for stability and a smooth transition. This handover could last a few months, for example with higher involvement in the beginning decreasing to less frequent check-ins. Having an option to access remote support should a young person struggle, or an incident occur is especially important during the early stages of a placement. Also, consider linking in with organisations that offer dedicated coaching in other areas, such as employability or digital skills, as involvement with these organisations is helpful for setting realistic expectations.



### **Knowledge and policies:**

Ensure that all staff, volunteers and the individual on placement understand current legislation and are well trained in health and safety, safeguarding and child protection procedures. This might prove a good refresher for your current staff as well as introducing the topic to a student.

Ensure that you have the correct insurance in place to host a placement, and have carried out a risk assessment – ensure that those on your placement know all they need to know, including where the toilet is and who they need to speak to with any concerns.

Use training to develop staff awareness, understanding around social anxiety, autism and other forms of neurodivergence or disability; not all staff need a full understanding, but there are many videos and resources online which can help open minds and help familiarise staff with various issues and challenges so young people face.



### **Post-placement:**

Plan ahead for the post placement phase. For example, who are you anticipating will give a post-placement reference? Will they know the young person well?

- CV and Reference - A CV is very important for a young person, so consider how you can help provide them with skills and experiences they can add to their CV. Often an individual can write their CV and job applications in quite a negative or flat way – help them pick out and add positive phrases as a reference can go a long way.
- Particularly in the case of a long placement, consider offering an exit chat to celebrate the placement and allow them the chance to ask questions and share their thoughts.
- Organisational Placement Review – look back at your goals, agreements and expectations and address what did or didn't go to plan, so that you can adjust for any future placements. This review can include the young person, but also your colleagues and any external support workers or referral routes. See appendix for a simple example of a post-placement feedback form you can adapt. [TO ADD]
- Note that young people may not be interested or confident in giving their feedback immediately, but perhaps when they feel they are in a better place in life. Maintaining relationships over the long term allows for gaining feedback and improved services, building a greater pool of potential employees or volunteers and it is very satisfying to see an individual's development.
- Organising more placements - If the young person you hosted is involved with the Jobcentre or any youth services, they will have representatives who will be willing to offer further support to the company and staff and will be able to refer more young people your way.

