

# PETROC



Facilitating youth social  
action, volunteering and work  
placements in rural areas

STRAND 2



HM Government



COMMUNITY  
RENEWAL FUND  
**PETROC**

# Contents

1.0 Introduction	4
1.1 Background - general overview of placement challenges	5
1.1.1 Covid	5
1.1.2 Importance of setting expectations	6
1.1.3 Transport	6
1.1.4 Communicating with young people	7
1.1.5 Placement providers	7
2.0 Transport	8
2.1 Transport- anxiety and personal challenges	8
2.2 Travel practicalities	8
2.3 Travel training- Young Devon case study	10
2.4 Travel training tips	11
3.0 Increasing skills, confidence and motivation	12
3.1 Choosing the right placement	13
3.2 Conduct a skills audit	14
3.3 Developing suitable opportunities - ahead of placement	19
3.3.1 Managing expectations	19
3.3.2 Making an agreement	21
3.3.3 Pre-placement induction process	21
3.3.4 Educational Health Care Plans - case studies	22
3.3.5 Interviews	26
3.3.6 Qualifications- digital badges	27
4.0 Conclusion	28
5.0 Appendices	30





# 1.0 Introduction

This guide provides practical advice and information on providing placements for young people. It is primarily aimed at youth workers, mentors, and other professionals working with young people. Additional printable information sheets for placement providers, and young people can be found in the appendices. The research has been carried out, between March and June 2022, as part of the 'Innovation for Youth and Community' project, with funding for the UK Community Renewal Fund. Devon County Council is the lead authority.

It contains research provided by seven project partners (listed below) and is illustrated with case studies, printable step-by-step guides, practical charts, and checklists. The project partners undertook areas of research within four key themes to provide information on best practice for placements for young people. These were:

- Increasing young people's confidence, skills, and motivation.
- Transport and young people's approach to it.
- Finding opportunities.
- Encouraging development of suitable opportunities.

The insights provided by project partners have been consolidated into this guide by Devon Communities Together (DCT).

The project partners who conducted the research were: Battling On CIC, Seadream Education CIC, Steamship Freshspring Trust, Whiz Kidz UK CIC, Young Devon, Petroc National Citizen Service and one of Petroc NEETS support including Petroc Skills for Young People, funded by the European Social Fund and the Education & Skills Funding Agency.



## 1.1 Background - general overview of placement challenges

### 1.1.1 Covid

Most young people have been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in some way. During lockdown, young people were isolated and away from learning environments through a key developmental time. Those who had existing low confidence and motivation, and a variety of mental health issues have been exacerbated.

There is a high demand for support services; especially mental health support. With the services at full capacity, those on waiting lists may wait at least several months for an appointment.

Some young people- particularly those with additional needs- are still concerned about the health implications of the pandemic. It is very important that they feel assured that precautions are in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19, creating an environment where individuals feel safe and their needs and abilities are understood.

The placement provider may not be aware of the impact the pandemic has had on young people; it is best practice to ensure this is communicated to providers, so they are able to take a sympathetic approach from the beginning.



### 1.1.2 Importance of setting expectations

Young people often have little idea of what placement they would like to do, nor what they want from it. For example, Steamship Freshspring Trust interviewed a young person who **“didn’t know what he wanted any more as he didn’t know who he was”**. Expect to provide guidance and encouragement around placement discussions.

Partners have shared that young people are frequently encouraged to find placements to suit their interests, but their aspirations may be unrealistic considering their skill set and availability of jobs in their local area (e.g. game designer, zoo keeper). Unrealistic encouragement can lead to disappointment further down the line. Petroc Skills for Young People’s project manager used the example: **“if a young person wants to be an accountant, they could take a placement as a cashier to start to build up experience and skills which could be transferred to accountancy later on”**.

Many young people also have unrealistic expectations of how much money they can earn- for many, the minimum wage is not an attractive prospect. However, with lack of experience and qualifications, it is likely that they will receive a lower wage than anticipated. As such, it is important to discuss and set expectations with the young person in the first stages of planning a placement.

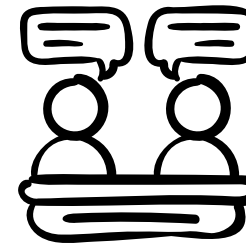
To ensure an individual will be safe and maintain a safe environment during a placement, it may also be necessary to assess an individual’s needs from a risk perspective, particularly when working with SEND individuals.

### 1.1.3 Transport

All of the above challenges are compounded by the issue of transport, which can be both a physical and emotional barrier to accessing placements. Public transport is perceived as unreliable, expensive and not following practical routes, especially for those who live in rural areas of Devon. Travelling by public transport is also a common source of anxiety.



### 1.1.4 Communicating with young people



Most young people will be uncomfortable with video calls or telephone and tend not to use email. They prefer WhatsApp or social media private messaging. There may be delays in responses as they may not have access to mobile data and may have to wait until they can find free Wi-Fi. Also bear in mind that literacy levels may be low; and they may not feel comfortable engaging with others.

### 1.1.5 Placement providers

Businesses at this time are affected by the aftermath of the pandemic, as well as other forms of uncertainty and challenges from Brexit through to rising inflation. As a result, businesses may be reluctant to take on extra responsibilities such as placements. Reassure the placement provider that there will be support for them to make the placement as straightforward for them as possible. Also, with staff and skills shortages, placements can aid with resilience, flexibility and innovation.





## 2.0 Transport

Transport can be a barrier for practical reasons (e.g. insufficient bus routes) and personal reasons (e.g. anxiety) and one factor can build on the other.

### 2.1 Transport- anxiety and personal challenges

A young person may have concerns around transport times, routes, and costs. There is often uncertainty around travelling to a new place, not knowing where to get on and off, and the risk of getting lost. Some young people find it difficult to read and understand timetables.

Being on public transport itself can be an overwhelming and anxious experience for some young people. Think of using public transport as if the young person is put into a room with many people they don't know.

### 2.2 Travel practicalities

Accessing other support services	Young Devon interviewed 31 young people about travel and transport in Devon and were able to depict various issues. In addition, during the surveys and interviews conducted by Devon Communities Together as part of strand 5's suite of data: Needs of rural young people and accessibility of youth support services, young people often quoted transport in reference to difficulties accessing other support services. Addressing transport issues in rural areas could be a 'gateway' to resolving other issues- providing access to support services, placements, work and wider social groups.
Lack of transport provision in rural areas	The various young people interviewed thought there are not enough services in rural areas, with the frequency, run times and length of journey being an issue. With shift work being a common form of employment, reliance on public transport doesn't just limit social life, but severely limits the job and placement opportunities for many individuals living in rural areas. This applies particularly for disabled people. One partner stated: <b>"there is a lack of accessibility especially for autistics -not given time to process -feel rushed"</b> . Young Devon
Unreliable and inaccessible timetables	The challenges around timetables are compounded by experiences some young people have had with unreliable, late or cancelled buses. Not everyone has the data availability or familiarity to use the companies' mobile apps to track disruption.
Transport costs	Public Transport costs are another major barrier and a common reason for young people to not use it, especially in rural areas. For example, currently, a day rider ticket costs £9.10 (£8.30 if bought on app) for 16+ year olds, which is more than 2 hours work at the minimum wage for under 18's (£4.10)



Here are some of young People's comments:

*"The bus company is putting people at risk for suddenly cutting short bus journeys, leaving people stood at bus stops over an hour or more because the bus has cut out a road and travelled on the main road instead. This has been followed on the App more than once."*

*"Restricting social life of those that live rurally. Last bus back to village from Exeter is 6.15pm"*

*"I don't understand how to use a bus timetable due to dyslexia. Missing buses because I don't understand the timetable"*

*"How can walking two stops more save a difference of £2 - I walk further to save the money"*

*"Make it reliable – there is always a worry it won't arrive"*  
**(train user)**

*"All buses go to town so have to catch two buses where there could be a more sensible route"*

*"Don't cancel buses on route"*

*"App could be clearer. Couldn't use App because my phone is not good enough"*

*"Train and buses cancelled or late often"*

## 2.3 Travel training- Young Devon case study

This case study shows that a pre-requisite to any placement may involve travel training and practice runs with a trusted adult to ensure the young person is familiar with the placement venue.



*“One of our mentors, SR, has been supporting a young person in North Devon for some time. When she was referred to us, the significant anxiety she was experiencing meant she struggled to vocalise and had not been comfortable leaving the house for several months.*

*Diagnosed with ASD, she had never travelled independently but as mentoring sessions grew her confidence, she decided to look for volunteering positions before approaching paid employment. The volunteering positions she felt most suited her interests and abilities were in a different town so would require an independent bus journey.*

*Sessions started taking place near the bus station in Barnstaple so that she could become familiar with the environment. SR supported with researching different methods of accessing timetables, using the website, app and physical timetable.*

*They then spent several sessions catching the bus together, familiarising themselves with the route and memorising the stopping points. SR drew attention to landmarks on the way, finishing the journey near a “sparkly tree”. SR then encouraged the young person to try it alone. SR would meet her at the bus stop, watch her get on the bus and then drive to meet her at the final stop. They repeated this several times before the young person was ready to get on the bus alone and just meet SR at her destination.*

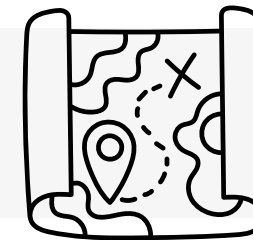
*The process took around 8 weeks and was a great success with the young person now travelling 3 days per week to her volunteering placement. Initially she would call or text to confirm she was on the bus and that she had arrived safely, but she now makes the journey completely unsupported.”*

**Young Devon**

## 2.4 Travel training tips

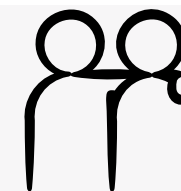
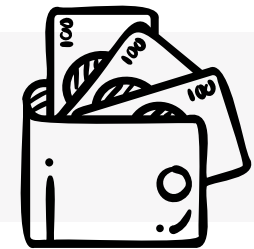
To help support with travel issues, consider:

Breaking it down to the lowest level of support - such as buddying up, meeting at the station, or following in a car can build up to completing the trip independently.



Checking through the various possible routes and sharing these with the young person can help ease preparation, or to consider a more direct and/or cheaper route.

Support with costs and expenses of travelling to placements, and also for interviews if possible



Consider meeting locations carefully and think of the travel access, for example arrange to meet the young person in the town centre rather than the organisation’s offices.

Check whether the individual is comfortable with and has access to video calling software and use these as appropriate for placements and/or interviews.



## 3.0 Increasing skills, confidence and motivation

The first stage of having the motivation to seek a placement is an achievement in itself and it is important to recognise and highlight this with the young person.

Confidence and motivation will hopefully build with each placement. It is a good idea to emphasise that a young person's first steps into work are potential directions to take in life; and the skills acquired in one role are stepping stones into the future.

Confidence can be built by building trusted and genuine relationships with both staff and peers. Whilst young people may be cautious at first to participate in group activities, it will usually be of great benefit in the longer term.

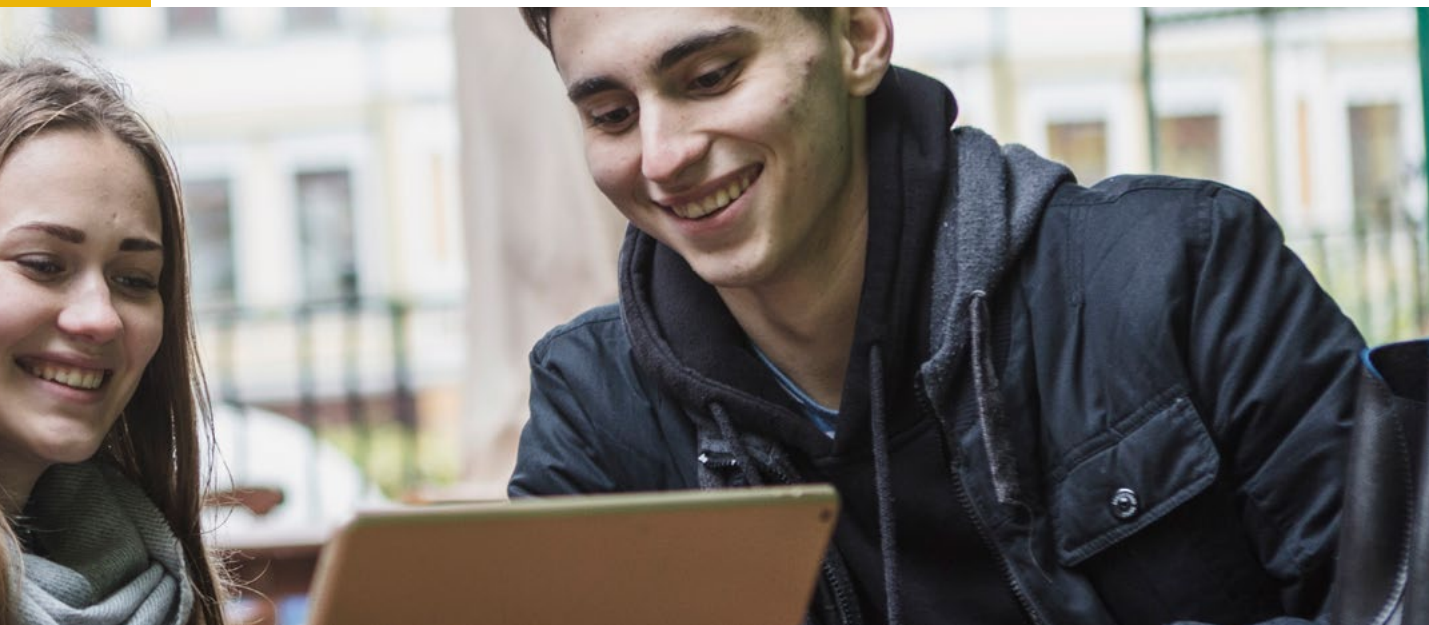


*"But I'm not being paid and it doesn't fit with my interests!"*

Steamship Freshspring Trust

Often young people are reluctant to go on a placement as they can't see what's in it for them. Encourage the young person to see the benefits a placement will give them such as new transferable skills, making new friends, etc.

For additional benefits, please see printable hand out for young people and placement providers in the appendices.



### 3.1 Choosing the right placement

Relating a placement to a young person's goals can help increase motivation. This checklist can be used to encourage the young person to think about what they would like to get out of a placement:

#### Why are you doing this placement?

- |                           |                          |                         |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| To learn something new    | <input type="checkbox"/> | To gain confidence      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To gain a qualification   | <input type="checkbox"/> | To gain work experience | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To get ready for learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | To have fun             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To meet new people        | <input type="checkbox"/> | To get a job            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |                          |

Figure 1  
Aspirations checklist

Encourage the young person to think about what skills they may already have without realising. For example, someone might keep a blog, or have an active YouTube channel, but may not realise this means they have a set of transferable skills – e.g. personal initiative, IT skills, communication skills, subject knowledge and digital skills. This is highlighted in the example below:

*"K was lacking in confidence and not able to identify the skills that her very impressive qualifications had given her. K stated that she knew she lacked in confidence but hadn't realised she hadn't analysed her experiences in the way a potential employee needs them to be analysed and described.*

*Through conversation about hobbies and achievements JJ helped her to pick out some important past experiences – such as winning a blog writing competition. JJ then helped K reframe this experience to add to her CV. In gaining confidence with K, it was important to find skills and show the value of those skills. Despite an initial stumbling block, and a CV that didn't seem to reflect the character or abilities of the individual, conversation picked out some excellent achievements that K hadn't considered worthy of mention. This revelation came as a big confidence boost – and helping it to be framed within her CV got the ball rolling for a vastly improved CV."*

Seadream Education CIC

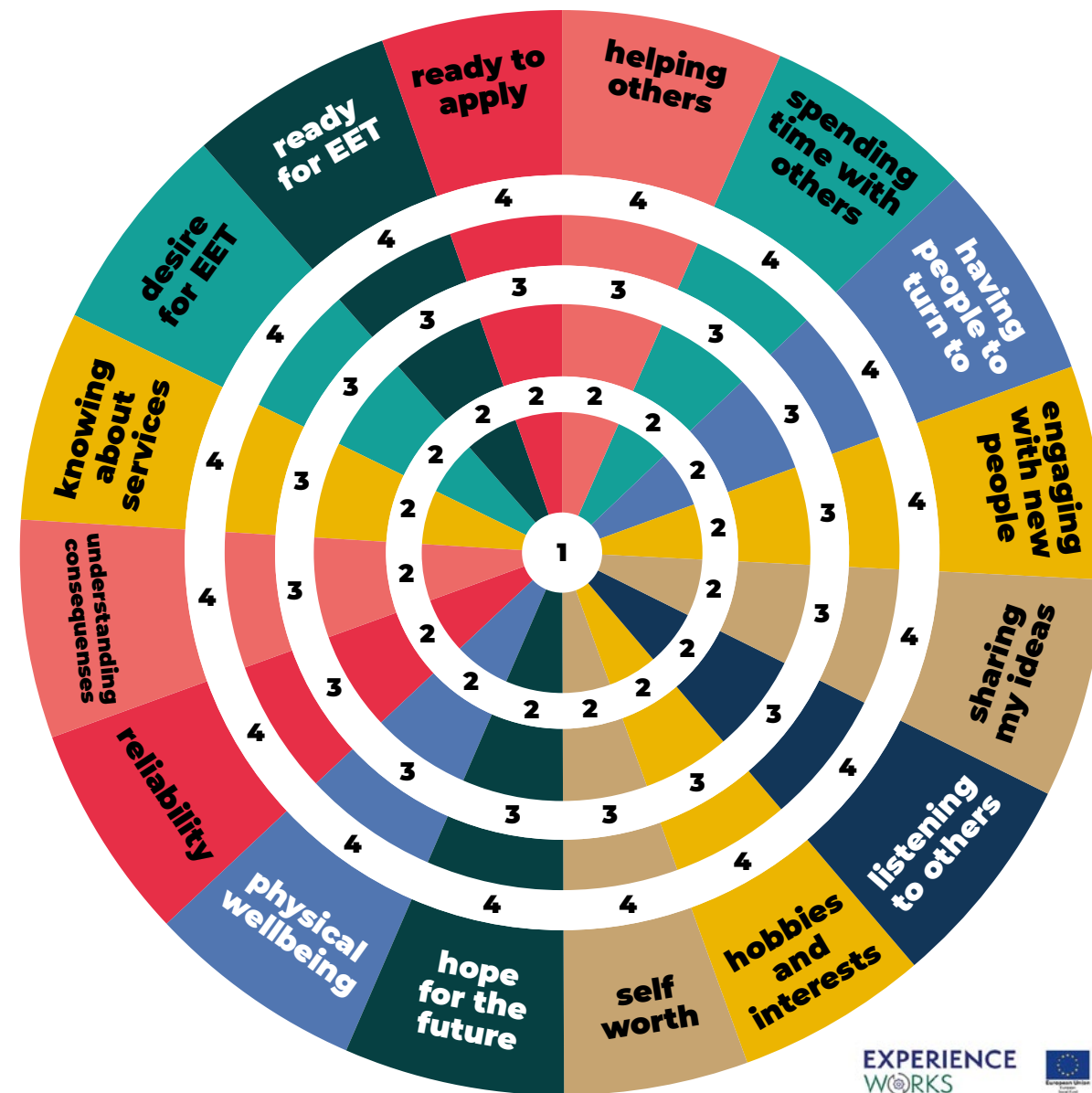




### 3.2 Conduct a skills audit

A skills audit prompts an individual to recognise the skills they already have; it can also be used to identify areas for future improvement. Audits may focus directly on employability skills or take a more rounded view of an individual.

For example, the Experience Works progress star (with accompanying guidance paperwork) supports participants and their mentors to identify strengths and weaknesses and establish the progress made.



**Figure 2**  
Progress Star - Experience Works project, part-funded by the European Social Fund

Common categories are listed below. Rather than a yes/no answer, it is best to assess each category on a scale.

-  **Confidence in oneself**
-  **Ability to deal with difficult emotions (e.g. anger, sadness, anxiety)**
-  **Confidence in asking for help and turning to others**
-  **Ability to, and methods for, promoting personal wellbeing/happiness**
-  **Ability to present oneself well, speak with others and build relationships**
-  **Ability to understand/complete tasks and problem solve**
-  **Ability to concentrate**
-  **Ability to listen and take feedback on board**
-  **Ability to use digital devices and internet**
-  **Education, literacy and numeracy levels**
-  **Knowledge of fundamental values (e.g. reliability, equality)**
-  **Hobbies and interests (e.g. reading, music, painting, being outdoors)**
-  **Involvements with clubs/sports/activities**
-  **Past achievements they are proud of**
-  **Independent living skills:**
  - Financial management
  - Food management
  - Personal hygiene and self-care
  - Home management and safety
  - Community or support service access
  - Transportation



For detailed prompts and questions under each category, please see templates in the appendices section of **strand 6 – Youth workers navigating support services**, or use interactive questionnaires such as: <https://viacharacter.org/> or <https://icould.com/buzz-quiz/>



## Case study

Seadream Education CIC's induction relies on building a long-term relationship based on listening to the young person. They try to understand the individual's needs and their past experiences. They draw on the person's strengths and positive experiences, offer continued support and keep records of key points to facilitate any future interactions:



“Seadream’s connection with “M” started with a request to join in with a community activity she had seen advertised on social media. From the initial phone call, Seadream’s Outreach officer (JJ) thought that the community activity wasn’t right for the individual but that there was potential for some other kind of involvement.

They planned a face-to-face meeting the following day where M described her circumstances, and the instinct that Seadream could facilitate M was reaffirmed. JJ listened intently and jotted a few simple notes throughout the lengthy conversation as a memorandum. M mentioned that this wasn’t off-putting as it wasn’t lengthy notes.

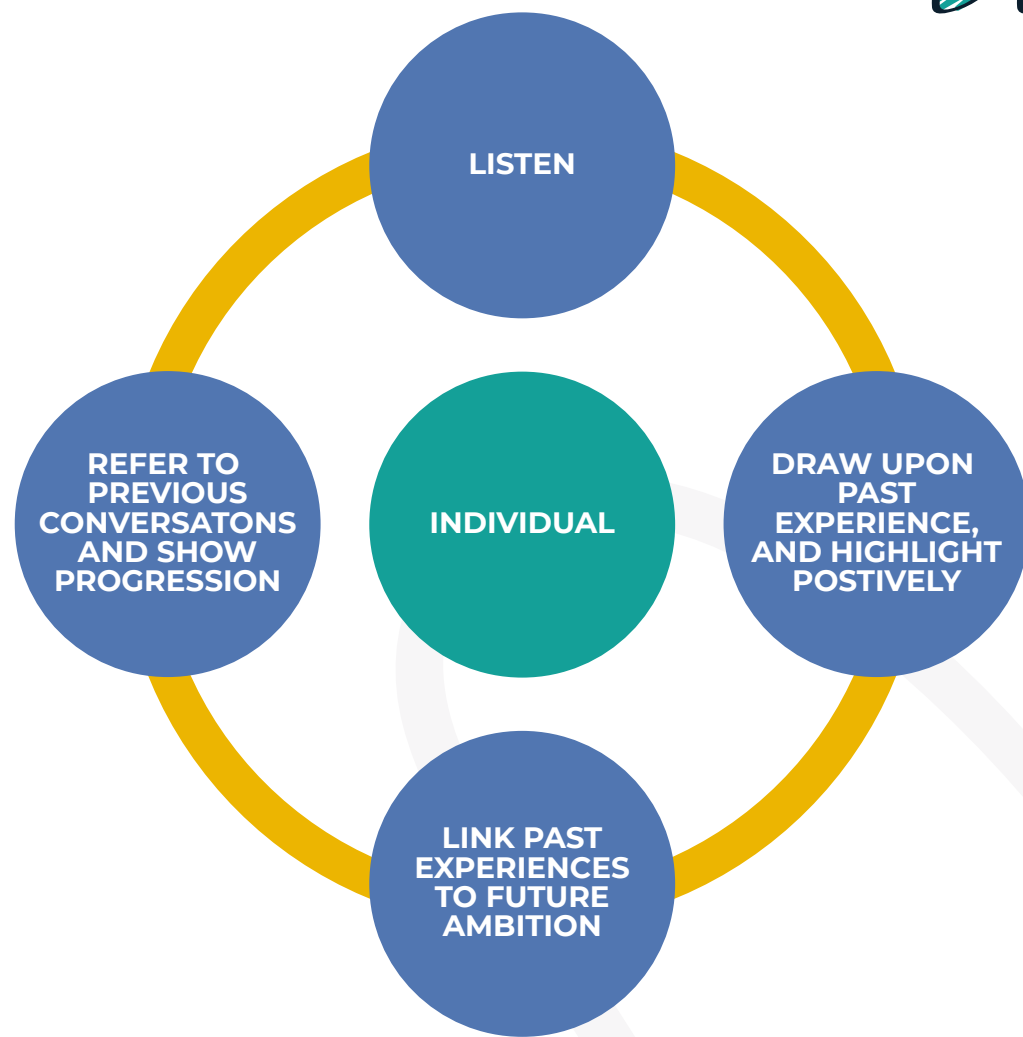
JJ kept in mind the initial reason for M to make contact as the desire to “join in”. JJ was impressed with the level of previous experiences that M talked about and made it clear this experience was all very positive and skilled. M felt relaxed to talk and trust was building.

The lengthy initial conversation was set the foundations to reflect/repeat back on previous experiences and make links to future goals. Following this initial conversation, JJ felt the need to offer an experience where M could feel like she had joined in but had also been of help to Seadream and a special sector of the community – and done something new. M

was very enthusiastic to help Seadream take out a group of adults with learning difficulties on a boat trip... She thrived in this task, repeatedly telling JJ how much she enjoyed it, how much she learnt and how rewarding it was to be helping this group of genuinely lovely people.

M and the Seadream team continued to hold regular communication through private messages on social media channels – which was M’s preferred way to keep contact. Another suitable opportunity soon arose with Seadream,”

**Seadream Education CIC**



**Figure 3**  
Seadream Education CIC’s chart illustrates how to help increase confidence and motivation by using a step-by-step process. Starting with listening to an individual, drawing out and positively highlighting their past experiences, then linking these to ambitions, and finally referring to previous conversations to demonstrate progress.

**3.3 Developing suitable opportunities - ahead of placement**

**3.3.1 Managing expectations**

It is important that a young person feels safe and supported and knows what they are going to gain from a placement. Similarly, a placement provider wants to know what is realistic to expect from a young person and how best to support them. It is important to communicate and manage expectations between the young person and placement provider.

Young people will have a variety of expectations; for example, those who are autistic or neurodivergent may need a greater level of detail about placement arrangements. Those who have previously been in a vulnerable situation, such as care leavers, may require greater assurance.

*“AB has autism which results in extreme anxiety and self-harming. AB has a numeracy and literacy age of a seven-year-old although he is 20. AB loves big vehicles and wants to be a bus driver.*

*AB’s autism means he takes everything said literally and it was vital that everyone working with him and supporting him understands this. He was once asked to pop some toilet paper into the loo. When his support worker went into the bathroom, he had put the toilet paper into the toilet “he’d popped it in the loo”.*

*When organising his next steps, we first had to manage expectations without denting his confidence. We organised for him to get involved in work experience at a local steam railway and his mentor worked closely with the staff and volunteers, so they understood his condition and the importance of giving concise non ambiguous instructions.*

*By working in this way, we were able to lower his anxiety and he had a very successful experience which boosted his confidence.”*

**Battling On**





On the other hand, some young people are more comfortable to start a placement if they don't have too much information beforehand. One of the partners noted that some young people may become anxious when thinking about an activity and not sign up, or may drop out. However, they may get involved on the day when others are involved and encouraging them. This is more likely when trust building work has built relationships and good foundations.

To meet different needs of individuals, it is best practice to have policies and processes available and communicated to the young person. It is also advisable to declare that safety policies, such as DBS checks, and risk assessments are followed and available.

When communicating the availability of a placement, an organisation should share a detailed 'job description', breaking down what the job realistically looks like day to day. Try and communicate visually and consider including information and/or images of:



For individuals with SEND, this information should be available in simple English in a variety of formats such as Makaton. Images will help to convey information. Digital information is easily shared and a young person may be able to refer to it and share it with a trusted adult in their home environment.

### 3.3.2 Making an agreement

While a placement is more relaxed than formal employment, it is important the young person and the placement provider agree on basic elements before the placement begins, so that they both know what to expect from each other. This agreement could be called a contract or a **'learning agreement'** and will build on information shared in the placement description, along with conversations about goals for achievements. Personal development and progress tracking could be built into the agreement.

Provide this information in writing and send it to the young person via their chosen method of communication, so they can refer back to it later.

Key items to agree on:

- How long the placement will last
- How many hours a week the young person will commit to
- Who the young person will be working with, and who they will be shadowing
- If there is a dress code and/or any safety information they should be aware of
- The tasks they will be responsible for and who will help them
- Incentives, qualifications or references they will receive
- Goals they would like to achieve during the placement

### 3.3.3 Pre-placement induction process

It is important to bear in mind that certain legal documents (such as ID) will be required for registration at the placement providers workplace, along with other information about the young person's circumstances such as health and accommodation.

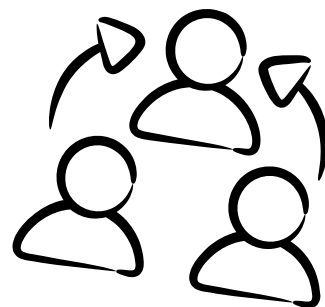
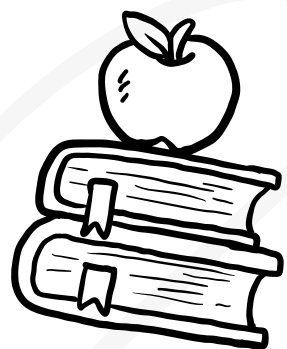
Key points of information to gather:

- ID: – various organisations require ID (birth certificates, passports, driving licence etc) so it is very useful to maintain a list of what ID young people have available as it can help speed up processes with other services
- Health status
- Educational level
- Accommodation
- Current financial position
- Support networks
- Preferred means of communication
- Interests and goals (see skills audit section above)
- Educational Health Care Plans (if applicable)

### 3.3.4 Educational Health Care Plans- case studies

The following are three examples of the flexible approach that is needed when working with young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). To successfully work with young people that have Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) it is important to understand the process involved in referring young people and the organisations that need to be involved.

If a young person is aged 16-25 years old and have an EHCP, it is vital that the referral process is controlled and that all the relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies are informed. For more details about the referral process for individuals with SEND, read Strand 6's suite of data - Youth workers navigating support services.



## Case studies

The following case studies have been compiled from SEND advisors.

When working with SEND it is vital that the process is slow, explained and always reassuring. In many cases multiple meetings, calls and consultations are needed to get a placement right for the young person.

### Case study 1



**MJ** has a diagnosis of:

- Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning delay.
- Generalised epilepsy with absences and photosensitivity.
- Diabetes (TYPE 1)

*MJ's behaviour is very erratic and abusive. He has problems with male figures within his life especially those in a position of authority. MJ lives at home but unfortunately his mother has developed a terminal illness and will soon be in the position where she can no longer care for her son. To support MJ, we started to work with him and Careers South West (CSW) to assess the types of placements that would best meet his needs. An initial meeting was held to ascertain what work placement MJ would like to do. He stated that he would like to work in bicycle maintenance.*

*A consultation was held with CSW, MJ and MJ's mother to explore different options – employment, apprenticeships, internships, and supported work placements to establish the right career.*

*Once this was established, a placement was secured for a bespoke package for MJ with 1-1 support in a work placement at ROC College. MJ's EHCP was updated for the new placement and a slow transition into the placement took place.*

*Early Intervention, Adult Social Services and CAMH's were all involved in the transition work."*

**Battling On**





## Case study 2



- CM has a diagnosis of Autism.
- CM is a selective mute.
- CM is monitored under the mental health team and suffers with PTSD from extreme domestic violence.
- CM and family were moved to the West Country over concerns of the family's safety.

Due to CM mental health and complex needs, the transition to a new placement was started early. CM is a selective mute and explained through writing that she didn't feel comfortable speaking on camera to CSW. Working with a support worker she indicated that she would like to either like to work in a hairdresser, washing people's hair or in a tea shop making tea. Working with her support worker and CSW, a very gentle approach was adopted. CM is very vulnerable, and her mother has been very proactive with the transition helping CM understand each phase of the process and feeding back concerns and worries they could be addressed before they became a barrier to transitioning.

CM secured a placement with United Response, which is a supported work placement provider. They will source 5 different work placements which CM can try to establish which sector she would enjoy being employed in.

United Response has two job coaches and a mentor who will support CM every step of the way.

The EHCP was updated, and the Local Authority was informed together with Adult Social Services.

**Battling On**



## Case study 3



- JMC has a diagnosis of 22q11 deletion which was diagnosed in 2012, which is associated with a variety of medical conditions and with learning difficulties.
- JMC also has velopharyngeal insufficiency (a failure of the separation between the nose and mouth) with submucous cleft palate leading to speech difficulties.
- JMC is coeliac
- JMC gross motor skills are delayed.

JMC was very reluctant to leave the comfort and familiarity of her college and was undecided on her future career path. Working with CSW, an initial meeting was held to explore options. JMC indicated she enjoyed art so the process of establishing which field of art she liked started. After trialling various options photography was chosen.

Initially a placement at United Response a supported work placement programme was selected. However, as time progressed JMC became very agitated, and it was decided with her mother that she was not ready for an employment course.

JMC was referred back to CSW to look at other options. Eventually a placement in St Austell called Reachout was selected. Reachout provides the Functional Skills and Arts Award where JMC would be able to do photography at the appropriate level.

The Reachout programme offers JMC the ability to transition into work as the young people at Reachout run the building as a meeting centre for individuals wanting a confidential space where they can meet clients, hold training sessions or community groups who want a relaxing informal place to meet.

The young people get the opportunity to develop skills in all aspects of running the business including skills in marketing, front of house hospitality, catering / baking, web design and promotion, putting on events, taking bookings, and the general running of the business.

Independent living skills also form an important part of the delivery, functional skills are embedded giving young people valuable hands-on experiences.

JMC's EHCP was updated and the Local Authority to organise transport.

## Battling On



### 3.3.5 Interviews

An organisation may want to interview a young person before offering them a placement. Many young people struggle with people dressed formally (e.g. suits) as it can remind them of difficult past situations. Ask the placement provider if, where possible, they could wear casual clothing, to keep the interview friendly, and in a setting that the young person is comfortable with.



### 3.3.6 Qualifications- digital badges

Digital Badges can be about anything and awarded to anyone that has achieved the specified criteria. Whereas an 'old-fashioned' certificate may just title the activity and the date that it was achieved, a digital badge clearly displays the earning criteria and skills involved in completing that activity, immortalising it online and giving earners the power, tools, and language to articulate their experiences when seeking future opportunities. Learners can proudly display badges on, for example, their LinkedIn Profile or CV. For more information see:

<https://badgenation.org/>

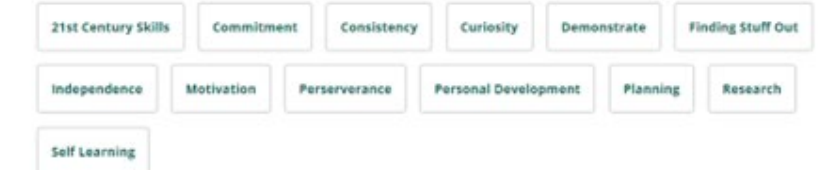


#### Real Ideas 21st Century Skills - Find Stuff Out - Demonstrate Badge

Issued by [Badge Nation](#)

Participants can effectively find stuff out and have shown the ability to plan, research and apply themselves independently. Earners of this badge have engaged in Cities of Learning activities ran by Real Ideas where the earner has demonstrated 21st Century Skills.

##### Skills



##### Earning Criteria

- 1 Earners of this badge have demonstrated ability to find things out for themselves regularly and consistently and show initiative.
- 1 Earners of this badge have demonstrated they are able to plan and research things and apply themselves independently.

Figure 4  
<https://www.credly.com/org/badge-nation/badge/real-ideas-21st-century-skills-find-stuff-out-demonstrate-badge>



## 4.0 Conclusion

This model has discussed how to prepare and support young people whilst they are considering and undertaking a placement. It highlights common concerns and challenges many young people may face. The entire model has been put together by using information and insights shared by project partners during IYC meetings, and in their research. The case studies presented here aim to highlight the wide variety of challenges encountered by young people, placement providers, and youth workers and mentors when organising a placement. It is hoped this model provides helpful advice for new mentors, youth workers, and other people involved with organising placements by preparing them to know what to expect, providing useful links, and sharing insights.

### Case study



In this case study, project partner Steamship Freshspring Trust discuss the importance of having a placement plan in place, how the Innovation for Youth and Community project helped them to be innovative, and how discussions during the project's research have helped inspire another Heritage Vessel to consider offering placements.

*We spoke with the Daniel Adamson who interestingly said that often young people find a connection with their ship; the ship was about to be scrapped but was instead rescued and refurbished and given a new lease of life; and some young people found an affinity with that determination. That perspective encouraged us that some young people might find that affinity with Freshspring.*

*Since the IYC project, Freshspring have taken on a placement from Young Devon. The participant wanted specific beginning, middle, and end with specific plans and learning plans attributed to the placement. Previously, we might have just put him on different tasks from week to week but through the IYC project, we recognised that placements need to link up more specifically with the individual, more bespoke.*

*It's a weekly placement for at least 6 months working with other volunteers to restore the galley as it would have looked at sea in 1946. In the future we are hoping to link in with Petroc College to provide a form of certification and link in with Appledore Shipyard to provide a heritage element to construction courses." In this case study, project partner Steamship Freshspring Trust discuss the importance of having a placement plan in place, how the Innovation for Youth and Community project helped them to be innovative, and how discussions during the project's research have helped inspire another Heritage Vessel to consider offering placements.*

### Steamship Freshspring Trust



*"When Freshspring joined the Innovation for Youth and Community (IYC) project,... we didn't realise the amount of potential the ship or heritage organisations have to support young people.*

*Visiting the Amber Foundation to meet young people about what they'd like from placements was a real eye opener for me. Many young people at the Amber Foundation have been homeless and/or are recovering from drug or alcohol addiction. I went there to talk with them about what work experience would interest them, but I was naive as I had no idea how far from mainstream life they would be. It was interesting to hear their perspectives- that they didn't want to do unpaid work; I was surprised they couldn't see the benefits of volunteering.*

*One of the things I really took from that visit was that one person said he didn't know what he wanted to do for a placement as he didn't know who he was anymore. He'd lost who he was and didn't know what might interest him. It helped us understand from some young people's perspectives and how they might approach a placement differently to a placement provider.*

Figures 5, 6 & 7

Steamship Freshspring, Public outreach display, Bunks in crew's cabin  
[Source- Steamship Freshspring Trust [www.ssfreshspring.co.uk](http://www.ssfreshspring.co.uk)]

# 5.0 Appendices

## Appendix 1 Placement planning checklist

	Yes/No	Comment
We have a clear idea of what we would like to achieve with a work experience placement.		
Other staff members are aware and supportive.		
We have a member of staff who will be able to supervise and train (potentially including different staff in different sections of the organization?)		
We have an induction plan in place.		
The young person knows what is expected of them.		
We have considered any legal issues and have the appropriate insurance in place		
We will support the young person to recognise the skills and experience they are gaining and celebrate their success.		
We have an end of placement plan which includes what we will cover in an exit interview		

## Appendix 2 Printable sheets

### PART I: YOUNG PEOPLE



Young people- what's in a placement for me?

- You will build confidence in a very supportive and nurturing environment, which is less pressured than a workplace.
- Learning new skills- Skills may be specific, like bricklaying, but other skills such as teamwork, administration or computer skills can be used in other placements and careers. This is known as 'transferable skills'
- Gaining experience and trying different industries and roles – with each placement you will learn about the company, understand better how employers and colleagues think and what industries and careers interest and suit you.
- Meeting new people- whether people your age or not, colleagues are often what makes a job more enjoyable.
- Gaining a reference - a manager will provide a reference which will look great on your CV. Make sure to ask about this if they don't mention it.
- Obtaining qualifications – placements can work towards a qualification. Whether it is something general like a DBS check, a food hygiene certificate, or something more involved. Employers can also award their own non-accredited certificates for positive involvement, such as certificates of completion or digital badges (see page XX).
- Becoming employed - You may be offered employment if there are vacancies available and both you and the employer agree it would be a good fit.

Here are some common things you can expect on a placement:

- Shadowing staff members to learn tasks
- Being given some specific tasks to fulfil
- Asking questions to find out more about how to do certain tasks
- Being shown different departments of the company



Top tips:

- Be curious and interested, and willing to adapt – ask questions and take the chance to learn.
- Try to be enthusiastic and willing – employers love a motivated and interested individual.
- Be reliable and honest – try and do what you say you will do but be open with any difficulties.
- Be punctual, tidy and presentable – a respectful manner means more than experience.

Printable sheets accessible to download here:



Part 1: Young People

## 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).

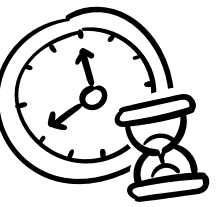
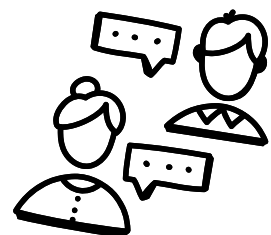
A young person needs to be made aware that, although there are expectations for their behaviour, this is not formal education. They should know they are considered part of the team and ensure they know they are allowed to use the bathroom, get water (etc.) as needed.

### **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 some 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.



*Printable sheets accessible to download here:*



**Part 2: Placement Provider**



# PETROC