

Six Best practice steps for work experience

- 1. Be committed to providing high quality placements.** Build your networks to increase the opportunities available for students. Remember the student-led approach does not often challenge class and gender stereotypes, nor broaden young people's career aspirations. Schools and colleges can improve the range of opportunities they offer by using brokerage services and networks (the Careers Hub team, your Enterprise Adviser, EBP, alumni) to strengthen links with local employers. Look for skilled as opposed to unskilled placements and train your staff to challenge stereotyping in the allocation of placements. Make sure the environment is safe and all the necessary checks are in place!
- 2. Timing and length.** Where possible be flexible in the timing and length of work experience – this reduces the competition and can help to gain the support of employers to provide placements.
- 3. Matching.** Students should ideally be matched to placements that are aligned with their career ambitions, skills and interests. The careers programme should encourage students to think about the significance of their work experience as early as possible; leaving it until year 10 can lead to students making hasty choices or facing tough competition.
- 4. Prepare your students.** Adequately preparing students for work experience is seen to contribute towards positive outcomes for both participants and employers. Employers can be dissatisfied and have negative experiences if young people are sent to them without any knowledge of what to expect or how to behave. Good preparation and positive experiences foster repeat offers from employers and increase the confidence of the students.
- 5. Structure.** Students can regard placements to be of limited value if they are 'low-status' roles incorporating repetitive tasks with no scope for wider career exploration and skill development. Schools, colleges and brokerage services should consult with employers to ensure work placements have a clear and varied structure, and to identify meaningful activities that students can be involved in and learn from.
- 6. Feedback and debriefing.** Encourage employers to provide feedback to students in terms of their performance. School debriefing sessions with students should also be held following placements in order to encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt. Student feedback should be collected in order to support the continuous improvement of placements. Don't forget to thank your employer hosts and to ask them for any feedback in terms of their experience as a host and any improvements you could make next time to make it easier for them. Remember a negative experience may make the employer reluctant to host a placement again.