

Guidelines on Work Experience Placements and Internships



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Note: Please be aware that any printed copies of this document may not be the most recent version. You should check on the Intranet to ensure that you are using the current version.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Work placements and internships are opportunities for young people and other members of the community to gain some experience in the workplace. This can be:
- During their time at school, usually in Year 10 and Year 13 and typically lasting a couple of weeks and referred to as **'work experience'**
OR
 - Whilst at university or college (or prior to going, during a gap year) and referred to as **'work placements'**
OR
 - When they have finished education and are entering the labour market for the first time. **Increasingly, the term 'internship' is used to describe a work placement for a graduate wanting to enter a particular profession.**
- 1.2 Work placements, work experience and internships must be carefully planned and organised to provide relevant and challenging work opportunities within a safe and healthy working environment.
- 1.3 The Council's objectives in providing short-term work experience are as follows:
- To inspire young people to learn more about working within Local Government, their local community and the public sector and to communicate career opportunities
 - To act as a community focused employer and contribute to the public relations profile of the Borough and the worklessness agenda
 - To bring in new ideas
- As well as the above, longer term placements and internships should provide participants with a meaningful experience that enhances their employability and skills.
- 1.4 Although all applications will be considered, priority will be given to people residing in the London Borough of Redbridge.
- 1.5 Work placements and internships with the Council should normally be no longer than 6 months in duration. Any placement or internship which extends beyond 6 months must be approved by a Head of Service/Operational Director and consideration given to provide a minimum wage. Further advice should be sought from Employment Relations.
- 1.6 The Council may be approached by individuals who wish to volunteer. Volunteering is where people give their time, skills and experience (usually to benefit the local community). Volunteers are under no obligation to perform work or carry out the instructions of the organisation for which they volunteer and so can come and go as they please. They have no expectation of and do not receive any reward for the work they do.
- 1.7 Where an individual makes enquiries about volunteering, they should be directed, in the first instance to the Redbridge Council for Voluntary Services (RCVS) on 020 8553 1004 or www.redbridgecvs.net. This is an umbrella body that works with over 800 voluntary and community based organisations in the Borough and is best placed to give guidance and support to find suitable volunteering opportunities.
- 1.8 If a manager wishes to offer a volunteering opportunity they should follow the principles and procedures within these Guidelines.

Note: Volunteers must not be engaged:

- To cover the duties of existing vacancies/substantive posts
- Where there is an opportunity to engage a redeployee
- Where there is an expectation that the volunteer is obliged to undertake work/duties
- As an introduction to secure paid work with the Council

2. Benefits

2.1 As well as the benefits to the person on the placement, there are many potential benefits to the Council, including:

- Raising the profile of the Service and the Council within the local community and elsewhere, creating a positive reputation amongst schools, parents/guardians and employees.
- Opportunities to benefit from present and future skills pools. Building links with schools, colleges, jobcentres, organisations for people with disabilities and other agencies can attract applications across the board. This will help to promote the Council as an employer of choice with a workforce which is representative of the local community and the services we provide.
- Employees helping with the training and supervision can develop their management and coaching skills and gain first hand experience of working with people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds.

3. Receiving and logging requests for work placements

- 3.1 Requests for work experience and work placements may come from a number of sources including: schools, parents, the individual or other sources such as Jobcentre Plus or ConneXions.
- 3.2 All requests should be notified to HR Direct so that they can be co-ordinated and logged. This will ensure that requests are dealt with consistently and fairly. If a manager receives a request for a work placement, they should forward details to HR Direct to be processed.
- 3.3 Members, managers and employees who wish to make a request for a work placement on behalf of friends or relatives should contact HR Direct in the first instance. All requests will be processed in line with these guidelines.
- 3.4 HR Direct will forward an application form, covering letter to applicants to ensure that they provide the necessary information ([please see template letter and form on the intranet](#)). Applicants will be requested to indicate any preferred Departments on their application.
- 3.5 Applicants will also be asked to complete an [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#), which will be retained by HR Direct and used to compile statistics on applications and placements. The information will not be used to decide on whether to offer a work experience placement or internship.
- 3.6 **HR Direct will review the applicant's information and, if suitable, forward it to appropriate officers within the Departments indicated by the applicant. Details of the applicant's request will be recorded.**

- 3.7 Services should review the request and if a Service is able to offer a placement, they should contact the applicant directly within 10 working days and also notify HR Direct. If applicants have not had a response to their application within 10 working days, they should assume they have been unsuccessful.

4. What to consider before offering a placement

- 4.1 Managers must consider the following carefully, before deciding whether to offer a placement:

Do they have sufficient time and capacity to organise and manage a work placement? This involves not only the planning and organisation of work activities but also the day to day supervision of the individual.

Will the participant need to be DBS checked?

Anyone who has direct, unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults must have had a completed Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before they can start the placement. This includes anyone on work experience, including young people over the age of 10 years old.

It may take several weeks or even months for a DBS check to be completed; in the case of short term work experience placements it is not an appropriate use of time or resources to instigate a DBS check. Therefore, the Council will not undertake DBS checks for those on short-term work placements, and they must not have direct, unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults at any time.

In the case of interns, who may be working for a longer period of up to 6 months, if the placement involves direct, access to children or vulnerable adults, they must have a completed DBS check before they can begin working with these groups in any capacity.

In the case of interns, can we pay a wage?

If the work placement or internship is more than 6 months– the manager should consider paying the minimum wage for the duration of the placement.

In this case, managers must ensure they have the necessary authorisation to arrange payment. If this is not done then the intern will not be paid. Work placements or internships must not be used to cover an established vacancy.

Note: the Council will not normally pay expenses (e.g. daily travel expenses from home to Council premises)

Who is available to supervise?

All placements must have an allocated supervisor who is able to instruct, coach, motivate and support, where necessary. Anyone on a work placement who is under the age of 18 must be supervised at all times.

How closely will the work match the needs and expectations of the person on the placement?

If the placement forms part of a qualification, the college or university may have set criteria for the work activities, assessment of learning etc. Individuals may also have specified the type of work they are looking for. Before offering a placement, managers must be certain that they can offer real work and learning opportunities at an appropriate level for the person on the placement

Is there a business benefit to the department /service by taking on someone on a placement?

For example, there may be a genuine benefit in having a new person in the team, with fresh ideas, to develop a new project or piece of work. Work placements must not be used simply to clear a backlog of work.

Are there any particular health and safety and/or data security considerations?

Managers must consider the working environment and activities and how suitable it would be for someone on a work placement – particularly if they are under 18 years of age (see sections 6.3 to 6.4). Where there is access to confidential information, the person on placement should be asked to sign a [Confidentiality Statement](#).

How should the work placement be communicated to the team?

Managers should consider how the team (and other key colleagues or contacts) are to be consulted about the work placement and what they may need to prepare beforehand. It is crucial that team members understand what the placement will involve and their role in its success.

5. Considering placements for people with disabilities

- 5.1 The Council wishes to encourage more people with disabilities to apply for work experience opportunities. It is essential that managers comply with the Equality Act 2010, which requires that all disabled applicants and employees are treated fairly. The Council will extend this to people on work placements; every effort should be made to implement reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This may include Personal Evacuation Employee Plans (PEEPS) or other risk assessments.
- 5.2 Managers can obtain further guidance and other relevant information by referring to the [guidance on the intranet on disability](#).
- 5.3 People with a learning disability may need a number of reasonable adjustments throughout the application process and during the placement/internship itself. Some guidance on this is given on the [intranet](#). For further guidance, managers should contact the Development Officer for Redbridge and Waltham Forest Learning Disability Partnership ext. 85183 or contact an ER Adviser.

6. Specific requirements for young people under 18 years of age

Parental consent

- 6.1 If the request has not come through a school, college or university the manager must obtain written parental agreement from a parent or guardian (see Appendix 6) prior to confirming the offer of a placement.

DBS Clearance for supervisors/managers of young people

- 6.2 When supervising young people under the age of 18 in a one-to-one situation, this should take place in an open plan office environment, and not in a private office. If this is unavoidable, it is essential that the supervisor or manager concerned has had satisfactory DBS clearance before the placement is agreed. (Further advice on specific conditions or situations where DBS clearance may be required is available from HR Direct).

Managing the Health and Safety of Young People

- 6.3 Young people at work will be unfamiliar with their jobs, their surroundings and the risks associated with them. Inexperience and a lack of trained judgement will mean that they are unlikely to recognise risks or pay sufficient attention to them. Therefore in addition to adequate training, young people are also likely to need more supervision than adults.
- 6.4 If the person on placement is under 18 years of age, there is a legal requirement for a risk assessment, before a young person can begin work. The manager must complete the **Council's [risk assessment form](#)**. A copy of the completed risk assessment should be sent to the parents/guardian/carer of the young person if under 18 years of age.
- 6.5 Please refer to further [guidance on health and safety risk assessments for young people](#). Further advice is also available on the HSE website:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/risks/>
7. Interviewing applicants
- 7.1 Managers are encouraged, wherever possible to interview potential interns and work placement applicants before confirming the placement in order to meet the individual and making a decision on the placement.
- 7.2 Managers should bear in mind that some students may have had little or no interview experience, and should adjust their questions and technique accordingly to suit to the age and experience of the student.
8. Confirming the placement and essential preparation
- 8.1 If the manager is able to offer a placement, they should notify HR Direct and then write to the applicant to confirm the placement (or to the contact in the school, college or university if the application has been made on their behalf). [A template letter is available on the intranet](#).
- 8.2 If the work placement has been arranged by a school, college or University, the manager should receive an agreement letter from them before the placement starts. This should give details of the student and their contact details.
- 8.3 If the work placement/internship has been arranged independently of a school, college or university the manager must contact the referee indicated on the application form. They should not confirm the placement until they have obtained a satisfactory reference.
- 8.4 Once a placement has been confirmed, the manager must notify HR Direct of:
- The name of the student/ intern
 - Start and end date of the placement (if these dates are subsequently changed, the manager must update HR Direct)
 - School, college, or university if applicable
 - Designated manager/supervisor

This is so that the Council maintains a central record of all placements, for insurance purposes. **All students and interns are covered by the Council's standard Employer's liability policy.** If a school, college, university or agency requests sight of the Council's policy cover, the manager should request this by e-mailing:
insurance@redbridge.gov.uk

- 8.6 Managers should devise a timetable of learning for students, indicating what they will be doing and who will be supervising each day of the placement. If the student will be visiting other departments, the manager should liaise with these departments as required. The responsibility for the timetable rests with the initial contact manager.
- 8.7 Managers should review information which is processed by the department hosting the work placement and avoid assigning any tasks or areas dealing with sensitive or local personal information. If this is unavoidable, the manager should append to the confirmation letter a copy of the attached Confidentiality Statement to be signed and returned before the work placement begins or on their first day.

9. Induction

- 9.1 Work placement participants must be given an induction and this should be recorded (an [Induction Checklist](#) is available on the intranet)
- 9.2 The following induction items should be covered on the first day the placement
- Fire and evacuation procedure
 - Health and safety responsibilities and accident reporting
 - Health and safety risk assessment
 - Tour of building, facilities and immediate work environment
 - Introduction to work colleagues
 - Information security and confidentiality
 - Code of conduct
 - Equal Opportunities policy
 - Next of kin and emergency contact details

If they will be using/have access to a PC, induction should also include:

- Temporary login details and procedure
- Accessing the internet and intranet and policy on usage
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessment

10. Supervision and support

- 10.1 The supervisor or manager should meet the intern/person on work placement regularly to review their progress. The frequency of these meetings will depend on the length of the placement and their learning needs.
- 10.2 If the placement has been arranged through a school, college, or university, or other organisation, a teacher or other representative may be required to visit during the placement – this should be accommodated wherever possible.
- 10.3 Where appropriate, and particularly on longer placements and internships, it is helpful if the participant has a mentor, who may or may not be someone within the department where the participant is working. Typically, the role of a mentor includes:
- Building a supportive relationship with the intern.
 - Acting as an independent point of contact for any concerns that the intern might have.
 - **Discussing career options and the intern's plans for the future.**
- 10.4 Those on longer term placements and internships should have a structured work plan which includes opportunities for learning as well as an outline of tasks and duties to be completed. It does not have to remain static and should be reviewed as and when needed.

A written log of progress should be maintained by the intern (in some cases, this will be provided by their college or university).

- 10.5 Those on internships may need additional help to identify evidence of their learning and skills, to demonstrate they have met the criteria required for the placement.
 - 10.6 All work must be checked regularly and any concerns or difficulties dealt with promptly.
 - 10.7 Any disciplinary issues must be investigated and dealt with promptly. If there is a serious breach of discipline the placement may be terminated if necessary. If the placement has been arranged through a school, college or university, the relevant person should be notified immediately.
 - 10.8 **Any accidents must be reported in line with the Council's health and safety policies and procedures.** If the placement has been arranged through a school, college or university, the relevant person should be notified immediately. If the person on placement is under 18 years of age, their parent/guardian should also be notified immediately.
11. Feedback and references and end of the placement.
- 11.1 In the final week of the placement, the manager should meet with the participant to review the experience and complete a [feedback form](#). The manager should retain a copy of the feedback form for 6 months.
 - 11.2 If the placement has been arranged through a school, college or university, the manager may be asked to complete an external feedback/evaluation form.
 - 11.3 For interns, a more detailed review meeting should be held to help them assess their learning and achievements and to plan the next steps. The following can be discussed:
 - What has the intern learned and how have they developed over the internship?
 - How well have they met their objectives? (set either at the beginning of or during the internship)
 - What have been their biggest/proudest achievements?
 - What projects have they completed or contributed to?
 - In what ways are they better prepared for the jobs market after completing this internship?
 - How well have they performed in general and/or on specific projects?
 - What are their strengths and weaknesses?
 - 11.4 Interns may request a reference from the manager to help them demonstrate to a future employer the skills they have developed and what they have achieved. Managers should use the content of the review meeting and may wish to add comments, if appropriate, regarding punctuality, team working, attitude and any exceptional skills or aptitude that they showed.