

Employers Guide to giving Work Experience to young people with a learning disability

What is Work Experience?

Work experience provides a vital opportunity for a young person to experience adult working life. It also allows the young person to see at first hand the link between school and work and the important skills needed for future employment. In recognising this link the young person can begin to set their own targets and become better prepared for working life.

Benefits of Work Experience for the participant

Work Experience will help the young person to:-

- Understand what it is like to work
- See the difference between school and work
- Discover what employers expect from their workforce
- Work with people of all ages
- Try out a job that interests them
- See if they need to change their career plans
- Understand the need for completing a job correctly
- Gain some experience that will assist when compiling a CV or applying for a job
- Gain feedback from the employer regarding their performance
- Talk confidently about work during interviews
- Gain employability skills

Benefits of Work Experience for the employer

Work Experience will benefit the employer by allowing them:-

- To observe the young person at an interview
- To discover if the young person has good attendance
- To discover if the young person has good timekeeping
- To observe the young person abiding by workplace rules
- To observe the young person demonstrating appropriate behaviour in the workplace
- To give training at a steady pace
- To decide what role is best for the young person
- To decide if the young person is right for the job
- To be able to liaise with a supported employment agency with work experience and employment matters
- To overcome any concerns regarding recruiting someone with a disability.

Supported Employment Agencies

There are many benefits to Employers when using a Supported Employment Agency for work experiences and Paid Employment.

- Staff onsite for specialised one to one training and support
- Support with confidence and social interaction
- Support with training needs
- Support with any change in duties or circumstances
- Assistance with contract issues
- Support with disability issues and legislation

1 to 1 training and support

It is a great benefit to employers when a supported employment agency is able to give 1 to 1 training and support.

The training given by a supported employment agency is specifically designed to ensure it is delivered at the correct level that will promote independence within their role as efficiently as possible.

There are 3 factors to consider when providing effective 1 to 1 training:-

- Type of training
- Amount of training
- Timing of training

The correct selection of each of the above will decide on the effectiveness of the training and the ability of the trainee to complete their tasks independently.

Being able to provide this specialised training is beneficial to employers because it doesn't put pressure on their training and resources.

Health & Safety and Risk Assessment

To ensure the young person remains safe and healthy the supported employment agency will complete a risk assessment. This risk assessment is designed to assess the risk and hazards associated with the young person's tasks within the workplace and implement any improvements or corrective actions needed to ensure the safety of the young person isn't compromised. The risk assessment is then discussed with both the employer and the young person.

On going Support

One of the main benefits to employers when giving work experiences or paid employment to young people with a disability or a support need is the on going support. On completion of the specialised training the supported employment agency would discuss withdrawal from the workplace with the young person and the employer allowing them to become independent. Withdrawal from the workplace is a gradual step and is during this time that the trainer would identify a natural support within the workplace to allow the young person to have someone to approach when assistance is needed. The supported employment agency would also maintain regular contact with the employer to ensure everything was okay. This contact could be regular visits or monitoring phone calls.

10 tips to Employers when providing a work experience

1. Use a Supported Employment Agency
2. Find out about the person
3. Find out about the persons disability
4. Provide an Interview and feedback
5. Identify appropriate tasks
6. Provide Day 1 Induction
7. Inform the workforce about the impending work experience
8. Encourage Interaction
9. Participate in Disability Awareness Training
10. Provide feedback and a reference to the young person

And of course convert the work experience to Paid Employment

In Summary

There are many benefits and advantages of work experience placements to both the young person with a learning disability and the employer.

It is with the assistance of specialised support agencies who are trained to bring together employers and young people with learning disabilities that enables the whole experience to be both positive and beneficial to all parties involved.