The Benefits and Myths of Work Experience

This document gives you a brief snapshot of the many benefits of offering work experience and also some of the myths and questions people have about work experience.

For a more comprehensive guide to work experience, please download the NHS Health Education England Health Careers Work Experience toolkit (click here).

The Benefits of Work Experience

5 Reasons to offer work experience –

1. To develop the future workforce – offering work experience is an opportunity to attract the future workforce and build a talent pipeline.

2. To work with the local community, providing an opportunity to engage, inspire and inform people – this is part of Corporate Social Responsibility.

3. To develop staff – it’s a chance for all staff to build management skills and in this case work with young people.

4. To gain fresh insights – see your organisation through someone else’s eyes. Innovation can come from many places and feedback and questions from students may provoke positive changes in your workplace.

5. To increase staff engagement – colleagues get a genuine buzz from inspiring people.

Work Experience Myths

Myth: I don’t have the time required to support someone wanting to do work experience in my practice

Initial support of anyone who is joining the workforce whether they be a paid member of staff or someone coming in to shadow existing staff will be required. However, by having a clear plan prior to the work experience candidate starting you will alleviate the amount of support required.

Creating suitable tasks or making sure that you have a plan for the period of time the person is with you is key to making the process as smooth as possible as well as being something that can be replicated again in the future. This planning process adds future value therefore as you can great an opportunity that is transferable to future work experience candidates.

Myth: “Patient confidentiality precludes work experience in many clinical areas”

Patient dignity and confidentiality must be maintained. This is written into the confidentiality clause that work experience students agree to abide by upon signing. Patients must be consulted about the presence of work experience students and the majority will have no objections. There may be some clinical areas which are inappropriate for younger pupils and students however these areas are limited and it is important that young people are given the chance to experience both the clinical and non-clinical roles involved in the delivery of mental health, Learning Disabilities and Children’s care.

Myth: “Work experience students can’t be taken in my area owing to Health & Safety issues”

A preliminary Health and Safety risk assessment for the placement must be conducted and standard Pre-Placement Health Questionnaire is completed by each applicant for work experience as for any
new recruit Each placement is risk assessed on an individual placement basis which aids to inform the manager of the potential of the placement.

**Myth: “Work experience throws up problems with DBS (Disclosure Barring Service, formally CRB) checks and child protection.”**

DBS checks are not required for work experience students under 18 who will be under supervision throughout their placement. DBS checks will normally only be needed for students in higher education on work placements as part of their clinical course or for adults interested in undertaking a work experience placement.

**Myth: “It’s easier to just allow children of staff to come in for work experience and not create opportunities for others.”**

We encourage that organisations make the Work Experience process accessible to all people and that work experience is advertised. You may have built relationships with specifics schools in your local geographical area but it is important that you encourage anyone to apply who is interested in finding out more about careers in general practice.

For reasons such as risk assessment, patient confidentiality, infection control, child protection, health and safety, violence and aggression policies, etc. all work experience applicants must go through the correct application procedure as well.