

Supporting trainees in the workplace

A guide for work placement
employers, coaches and
mentors

**This booklet accompanies the audio guide to
supporting trainees in the workplace.**

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Foreword

Welcome to this learning package which aims to help you to get the most out of being a supporter, coach and mentor for a young person in the workplace.

Throughout this package the term trainee is used to describe the young person you are working with. Traineeships are a recognised government funded learning programme for young people between the ages of 16 and 24, which are based on a structured work placement.

There are other circumstances in which you may be supporting a young person in your workplace, for example a short period of work experience, an extended internship or an employed apprenticeship. The principles and practice described in these modules can be applied to all these situations.

This learning package will provide you with the knowledge and understanding to be effective in your role. There are also some suggestions for practical activities to help you to put your learning into action.

Please note that this booklet is not intended to be a stand-alone resource. It has been designed to help you to get the most from the audio guide to supporting trainees in the workplace which can be downloaded from www.traineeship-staff-support.co.uk. A transcript of the audio guide is available from the website if you would prefer to read the material rather than listen to it.

Resource pack

We have provided a number of template resources that can be downloaded from the website. Where a resource links to a particular module it is referenced in the audio guide and in the relevant module of this booklet. They are provided in 'MS word' format so that they can be adapted to suit the needs of individual trainees in a range of work placements.

- **Example of a work placement agreement**
- **Template for recording developing positive attitudes and behaviours at work**
- **Template for recording developing workplace skills**
- **Sample menu of workplace skills in a range of work settings**
- **Example of a placement induction record**
- **Sample learning styles exercise**
- **'Where are you now?' self-assessment exercise**
- **Work based project template**
- **Work placement activity record template**

A note for training providers:

The material in the audio guide, together with the exercises suggested in this booklet and the template resources provided, can also be used to structure and support training sessions or workshops.

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Module 1 - Introduction and getting started

This module introduces the learning package and looks at some of the practical and legal aspects of placing a trainee in a workplace.

Here are some suggestions for using this learning package

The package incorporates the audio guide, this accompanying booklet and the template resources.

- The audio guide describes the key principles of supporting a trainee in the workplace and provides the underpinning knowledge that will help you to become a good coach and mentor.
- This booklet contains summaries of the information in the audio guide, exercises to support your learning and activities to help you use what you have learnt.
- The template resources can help you to structure your support for the trainee.

The six audio modules are designed as a sequence of learning but they can also be used individually.

Module 1 concentrates on the start of the placement.

In this module we set out the three key elements in supporting a successful work placement and introduce the role of the training provider.

There is an example of a work placement agreement that sets out the roles and responsibilities of the employer, the trainee and the training provider in the resource pack.

The legal framework

Trainees in the workplace are protected by the same legal framework as employees. Here is a list of the relevant legislation:

- The Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986
- The Race Relations Act 1976 and the Amendment 1999
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2006
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992

You do not need to know the detail of this legislation, but you do need to be aware that your trainee is protected by it. If you have any concerns, your training provider will be able to help.

Things to think about before your trainee starts:

- Has my organisation got the relevant employer liability insurance in place?
- Have I taken account of my responsibilities to protect the trainee's rights according to the relevant legislation?
- Have I thought about the three key elements for success – shared expectations, a supportive mentoring arrangement and planning for progression?
- Is there a signed agreement between my organisation, the training provider and the trainee that sets out the roles and responsibilities of each party?
- Do I know who to contact in the training provider (or the training arm of my company) for questions or issues that arise during the placement?

If you are in any doubt - talk to your training provider.

Module 2 – Shared expectations

In this module we look at how to create a productive relationship with your trainee.

- You may be a supervisor or team leader who has been given responsibility for supporting a trainee placed in your team by your HR or training department.
- You may not have any supervisory or line management role, and have been offered the opportunity to 'look after' a trainee to develop your own experience
or
- you may be an employer running a small business who is taking direct responsibility for a trainee.

We describe the stages that you will go through, whatever the circumstances of your support.

- Stage one – gain commitment
- Stage two – get to know each other
- Stage three – work and learn together
and
- Stage four –evaluate and move on

We will refer to each of these stages as we work through the modules.

This module concentrates on stages one and two.

Stage one - Gaining commitment

This stage is when you agree what the purpose of the placement is, what you and your trainee hope to achieve and what you can expect from each other. This stage is often completed with the support of a training provider before the placement starts.

Here is an activity you can do to help you to think about what experiences you will offer your trainee and what skills they will develop while they are with you – the 'what' part of their development:

Developing workplace skills:

Take a blank piece of paper and write down all the things your trainee will experience and do while they are with you. Don't worry about the order – just make a list as you think of things.

Now try to put your list into categories – groups of activities and experiences that are related.

Can you find a label for each of the categories that describes the skills they are developing by experiencing and doing these activities?

Now think about how you expect them to behave and act while they are with you– the 'how' part of their development:

Developing positive attitudes and behaviours at work:

Take a blank piece of paper and write down how you expect your trainee to behave and what attitudes you would like to see them demonstrate. Remember to state the obvious. It might be obvious to you but it might not be to a young person with no experience of work.

Think about which behaviours you are prepared to help develop – and which are fixed and non-negotiable from the start.

Can you make this into a checklist that you will monitor against?

One way that you can support your trainee to understand the rules and expectations of your organisation is to give them a company induction at the start of the placement. Including expectations such as dress code, use of personal mobile phones and acceptable language in this induction is a way of introducing the 'unwritten' rules without sounding negative.

There are suggested templates for recording developing workplace skills and developing positive attitudes and behaviours in the resource pack. There is also an example of a workplace induction record.

Stage two – Getting to know each other

The second part of module 2 looks at the steps you can take to get to work out the best way for you and your trainee to work together:

- Find out about their background, experience and aspirations.
- Tell them about your background and experience.
- Find out about their preferred learning style – and yours.

A sample learning styles exercise is provided in the resource pack.

Before you move on to module 3, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I know what the ultimate goal of this work placement is?
- Have we got some specific shared objectives to work towards?
- Do I know how my trainee learns best – and can I adapt my own style to meet their needs?

Don't forget – your training provider is there to support you if you have any concerns.

Module 3 – Introduction to coaching and mentoring

Modules 3, 4 and 5 cover Stage the third stage of your relationship with your trainee – working and learning together. This is the stage that makes up the largest part of a work placement. Module 3 introduces you to coaching and mentoring.

What do we mean by 'coaching' and 'mentoring'?

Module 3 of the audio guide takes a detailed look at the roles of coach and mentor. The differences and similarities between these two roles are explored.

It is recognised that a trainee in the workplace needs both a coach and a mentor.

Sometimes the roles are fulfilled by different people. In a large organisation a trainee can have a number of coaches who help them to acquire different skills, and a workplace mentor who brings the whole experience together.

In a small organisation it is more common for the coach and mentor roles to be combined.

The overall aim of good coaching and mentoring is to help someone build on their strengths, overcome their weaknesses and realise their potential.

When you have looked at coaching and mentoring and thought about whether your role is more of a coach or a mentor – or a combination of both – module 3 goes on to look at

Coaching and mentoring skills

Here is a list of skills you need to develop to be a good coach or mentor:

- Setting clear expectations
- Engaging and motivating people
- Observation
- Active listening
- Asking effective questions
- Praising good performance
- Challenging poor performance
- Giving constructive feedback
- Reflecting on and learning from your experience

Don't be put off or alarmed by this long list – you probably already have many of these skills and use them naturally all the time. You just don't think of what you are doing as a skill.

The next list in the audio guide is a list of qualities that trainees who have had a work placement want most in their coaches and mentors. This is what they said:

- 'Be interested in me'
- 'Be enthusiastic about having me'
- 'Be fair'
- 'Be consistent'
- 'Be kind'
- 'Be patient' - and
- 'Have a sense of humour'

There is a 'where are you now?' exercise in the resource pack that will help you to think about your existing skills and what your development needs are.

Before you move on to module 4, think about what you have learned from listening to this one:

Are you naturally more of a coach or more of a mentor?

Which do you need to be in the role you have taken on or been given?

What skills do you already have and what do you need to develop?

Think about someone who has helped you to develop in your career or in an aspect of your leisure or personal life. What was it about them that helped you?

Module 4 – Developing your coaching and mentoring skills

In this module we start with the important skill of engaging and motivating people and follow on with the skills of observation, active listening and effective questioning.

Engaging and motivating people

Here are some tips for engaging your trainee:

- Set clear objectives and keep referring back to them.
- Organise learning in a way that meets their preferred learning style when possible.
- Introduce some 'active' tasks from the start.
- Try to keep a balance between the routine and the interesting.
- Have a 'what to do when there's nothing to do' list.
- Give them a project to be responsible for.

There is a template for recording a work based project in the resource pack.

Take note of the information about motivation in the audio guide. You can't force someone to be motivated - you need to arrange things so that they feel motivated. Try to find out what motivates your trainee.

Young people often find it hard to describe what motivates them. It will be through using your observation, listening and questioning skills that you get a real insight.

Observation

If you can sometimes step back from watching the task, and concentrate on observing the person, you can gain valuable insights into their motivation and confidence.

Observing their body language can prompt you to ask appropriate questions about how they are feeling.

The important thing for a coach or mentor to do is to look for the clues - and then ask appropriate questions.

Don't forget to take account of your own body language when you are with your trainee. Be a role model.

Be aware of cultural differences in the way gestures and posture are perceived.

Active listening

When you actively listen to what people say you show them that you value their thoughts and ideas. If you train yourself to listen actively rather than passively you will be able to pick out the key messages that someone is giving you and respond to them.

The audio guide gives you some techniques that can help your listening to become more active:

- Be prepared to summarise the main points that someone makes.
- Try reflecting your understanding of what has been said back to the speaker.
- Prompts can be helpful.
- Use the little non word noises like 'uh-huh' and 'mmm' carefully.

However under-developed your own active listening skills are, they will almost certainly be more advanced than your trainee's! Active listening is a learning skill that your trainee needs to develop – and if you model the techniques when you are listening to them they will get the idea.

Here is an exercise that might help you to develop your listening skills:

Listen to a recording of a radio talk programme that you would not normally choose, (BBC I-player is a good source) and set an alarm to go off two minutes after the start. When the alarm goes off, pause the recording. Now try to repeat accurately the last sentence you heard. Then try to summarise the important points of what you have heard so far. Now go back and check how well you listened.

Listening without visual clues is more difficult than actively listening to a person you can see – so you can

also try summarising in your mind what colleagues or family members say to you – you might find you want to reflect something back.

Effective questioning

The final part of module 4 looks at the skill of effective questioning.

It explains the difference between closed questions and open questions and how they can be used effectively in a coaching or mentoring role.

Asking effective questions can make people reflect on their actions and help them gain a better understanding of themselves and others. This is one of the main purposes of mentoring.

Before you move on to module 5, think about what you have learned from listening to this one:

Do you know what motivates your trainee?

Do you think about how your body language is giving a particular impression?

Are you a good observer and an active listener?

Do you think about how you will phrase a question before you ask it?

Module 5 – Effective monitoring and review

In this module we look at the skills needed for effective monitoring and review.

Praising good performance, challenging poor performance and giving constructive feedback are all part of the monitoring and review process.

Monitoring refers to the collection of information about how your trainee is performing.

Reviewing helps you and your trainee to reflect on how the placement is going, identify achievements, address areas for improvement and plan for next steps.

The frequency and content of the reviews will vary depending on whether your role is more of a coaching role, more of a mentoring role, or a combination of both.

Remember that while you are developing your trainee you are also developing your own coaching and mentoring skills – so don't forget to monitor and review how you are doing as well.

Although some form of recording is necessary to capture progress, it is the discussion that is the important thing.

The responsibility for recording 'what I have done' and 'what I have learnt' normally rests with the trainee.

Training providers will give the trainee guidance on how to record their activity and learning – and encourage them to do it.

A simple example of a work placement activity record is included in the resource pack.

If you have used a simple template to set out the objectives for developing workplace skills and developing positive attitudes and behaviours, like the examples in the resource pack, recording progress towards the objectives is quick and easy.

The number of 'formal' reviews with the training provider present will depend on the length of the placement. Your training provider will have a standard format for recording any formal reviews and it is their responsibility to do this.

The 'plan – do – review' cycle

One way of structuring your ongoing support for your trainee is to follow this classic learning cycle.

It is explained in full in the audio guide.

Key features of the 'review' stage of the cycle include giving feedback to your trainee in a way that encourages and supports them to move forward.

While we are looking at praise, challenge and feedback, let's remember the personal qualities that trainees asked for in their coaches and mentors:

- 'Be fair'
- 'Be consistent'

and

- 'Be kind'

When you are giving praise, challenging unproductive behaviour, or giving feedback in a formal review it is helpful to remember these - and keep the perspective of the young trainee in mind.

Here are some tips for effective feedback:

- Be prepared
- Be specific
- Start with a positive
- Choose your words carefully
- Focus on the behaviour not the person

Don't forget to -

- Leave space for your trainee to respond to the feedback
- Summarise their responses and reflect them back.
- Conclude the feedback with a 'moving on' statement.

Remember that feedback is just one part of the 'plan – do – review' cycle. It is only helpful if it leads to positive action.

Don't forget that the training provider is a support for you as well as for your trainee and they will help with the review process.

Here are some things to think about when you have listened to module 5:

Do you give praise when it's due – even for things that might be considered expected?

How comfortable are you with challenging rather than criticising?

Think back to any reviews you have had with your managers – what made it a positive or negative experience?

Module 6 – Moving on

The final module of the audio guide looks at the final stages of your support for your trainee.

You are asked to consider how you can help your trainee progress into employment or further learning by

- providing information
- offering advice
- referring them to someone else for guidance
- acting as an advocate.

This module gives you information about the final review of the work placement and the key role of the training provider in this process.

It is important that the final review is an honest evaluation of the placement. Your trainee will use it to update their c.v. and prepare for interviews - and you will use it to inform any reference or testimonial that you provide.

A number of scenarios are considered:

- a placement that ends earlier than planned
- a placement that has been successful - but with no opportunity for employment within your organisation
- there is a suitable opening in your organisation and you would like your trainee to apply
- you offer them the job and they accept

This module gives guidance for ending the placement in a positive way, whatever the final outcome.

The end of a placement is also your opportunity to reflect on your own experience.

Think about what you did well, and whether there is anything you would do differently next time.

Is there any additional support or guidance that you would have found helpful?

What did you get from the experience?

What problems did you encounter and how did you solve them?

What have you learnt about your own skills as a coach and a mentor?

What advice would you give to someone else taking on a trainee?

Supporting a trainee in the workplace can be a hugely rewarding experience. Knowing that you have helped a young person take the first steps into a career is very satisfying and you will feel a great sense of pride when they succeed.

We wish you every success in your role.

Use this page for your own notes

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www.traineeship-staff-support.co.uk

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