

Work experience policy

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1. Introduction

In the current competitive job market there is an increase in the number of schools and colleges wishing to place students in the workplace to broaden their understanding of the world of work. Similarly, requests for unpaid work experience opportunities are made by individuals seeking to enhance their career prospects.

Through the provision of work experience placements the Trust can support students and young people in making informed career decisions by developing and expanding their knowledge about the work of the Trust and the NHS as a whole. Work placements can also support those who have experienced mental health problems in returning to employment.

Work experience placements are often part of a professional qualification and an essential part of clinical training, for example for clinical psychologists.

Any support and facilities provided to work experience schemes must be measured/balanced against available Trust resources and service needs.

A clear distinction must be made between work experience and volunteering (see definitions in 10. below). Reference should be also be made to the Trust's [Volunteer Policy](#)

2. Policy Statement

The Trust may support work experience placements where these are part of an approved programme or scheme provided by an external organisation or as part of an agreed in-house Trust work experience programme as described in section 10.

Work experience placements may complement and enhance the work done by employees of the Trust, but should not be used to replace paid employment.

3. Purpose or Aim

The purpose of this policy is:

- To set clear parameters for the support the Trust gives to work experience schemes and placements, and to describe the key issues that must be addressed when such a placement is supported.
- To ensure that those undertaking work experience within the Trust are engaged in accordance with health and safety legislation and are provided with a safe, hazard free environment.
- To ensure that the care and confidentiality of service users is not compromised by the provision of work experience placements and that appropriate safeguarding measures are taken.

4. Scope

This policy applies across the Trust in all situations where a work experience scheme is agreed and supported, and where requests for work experience or observation/shadowing opportunities are received from individuals.

This policy does not apply to students and learners on placement with the Trust through the Health Education South West. Priority for placements must be given to students from the courses listed in the Agreement. For full details of students covered by this agreement, see the Health Education South West Learning and Development Agreement.

This policy does not apply to volunteers and volunteering which is covered in the Trust's Volunteer Policy.

5. Policy Principles

Work experience placements must be for a specified period of time. This will depend on the nature of the placement. Work experience for school aged students will normally be no more than 2 weeks, but students on college or university course may have placements for longer periods as part of their course. See Appendix A for details of the accepted types of placements.

Individuals under 17 years will not be permitted to undertake work experience placements in clinical areas due to the sensitive nature of work undertaken with service users and to protect the safety of the individual.

The Trust will be responsible for the health and safety of work placement students whilst they are on Trust premises or undertaking allocated duties elsewhere, and risk assessments will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's [Health and Safety Policy](#).

Where work experience placements are being offered to individuals under 18, in non-clinical areas, a young person's risk assessment must be carried out in accordance with the Trust's [Risk Assessment Policy](#).

Individuals on work experience placements will be covered by the Trust's public liability insurance whilst on Trust premises or undertaking allocated duties elsewhere.

Where work experience placements or observation/ shadowing placements are in clinical areas or involve access to service user information, appropriate safeguarding checks will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's [Disclosure and Barring Checks Policy](#) prior to the individual starting the placement. This may be carried out by the work experience scheme organiser (e.g. college, university school, or organisation supporting placements such as Connect).

Where individual(s) on work placement or observation/shadowing placements will be observing, or taking part in clinical work, the appropriate consent must be obtained from service users.

Where an individual on work placement will be undertaking professional clinical work (e.g. psychological therapy) a licence to practice must be obtained prior to commencement of the placement.

All individuals on work experience placements will be given appropriate induction and allocated a manager who will oversee and monitor the placement and comply with the responsibilities detailed in 6 below.

Individuals on work experience and observational/shadowing placements will be appropriately supervised. They will be required to comply with the responsibilities detailed in 6 below.

Work experience placements are unpaid. If expenses resulting from carrying out the role are to be reimbursed, this will be agreed in advance as part of the work experience agreement with the individual and the scheme organiser (for example, the college or school).

The Trust reserves the right to discontinue any work experience or observational/shadowing placement with immediate effect on the basis of the needs of service users or the organisation, where the continuation of the placement would be detrimental. Any work experience agreement must make this clear.

Any concerns arising out of a work experience or observational/shadowing placement relating to safeguarding issues must be raised with the Head of Safeguarding without delay.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that work experience placements are agreed in accordance with an approved programme or scheme.

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- Ensuring that a Licence to Practice is obtained for all individuals on work experience placements undertaking professional clinical work, prior to commencement.
- Ensuring that all health and safety requirements are met in relation to the work experience placement. This includes ensuring that risk assessments are undertaken for individuals on work experience placements, paying particular attention to the requirements for individuals under 18 years old.
- Ensuring that appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out in accordance with the Trust's Criminal Records and Barring Checks Policy, either through the Trust's Employment Services Department or by the work experience scheme organiser.
- Ensuring that the individual undertaking work experience has a clear understanding of the duties of care and confidentiality required for working in a mental healthcare environment, and that they receive the necessary levels of supervision at all times.
- Notifying the work experience programme organiser (e.g. college) if any problems arise that cannot be dealt with informally with the individual, or they wish to terminate the placement.

6.2 Work Experience Participants will:

- Sign a statement of agreement issued to them by the Trust prior to starting their placement, and comply with the terms of this agreement throughout their placement.
- Comply with health and safety requirements and act responsibly at all times, taking care not to expose themselves or others to risk.
- Keep confidential any information they receive about the Trust, its service users or staff.
- Be aware of their personal boundaries and must always alert their allocated manager if a service user is known to them outside of the clinical environment.
- Report any difficulties or incidents to their allocated manager, including their non-attendance for any reason.

6.3 The Head of Human Resources will:

- Ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out for individuals before they start work experience or observational/shadowing placements, where this has not been undertaken by the work experience placement scheme Organiser.
- Consider proposals for in-house work experience schemes and approve if appropriate, in conjunction with the relevant member of the Triumvirate.

6.4 LDU and Specialised Services Directors will

- Consider and authorise where appropriate new work experience schemes to be established by the Trust in a particular area or profession.

7. Standards

This policy will be measured against the requirements of employment legislation and the best practice expected from a modern health organisation

8. Training

Advice and support in relation to learning opportunities for work experience placements are available from the Learning and Development Team and from the organisation running the work experience programme/scheme (e.g. college programme co-ordinator, course tutors etc.)

9. Monitoring or Audit

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Representatives from trades unions formally recognised by the Trust and management representatives have drawn up this policy. Monitoring information will be provided by the Trust as part of this review. Managers are required to monitor the application of this policy and to provide exception reports to the Strategic Workforce Group if needed.

This policy will be reviewed after 3 years or earlier at the request of either party.

10. Definitions

Work Experience is defined for the purposes of this policy as a time limited placement on the Trust's premises, or on Trust business in an approved location (e.g. GP's surgery) during which the individual undertakes or observes tasks and duties carried out as part of normal working practice for a particular type of job role, professional practice or work environment, with an emphasis on the learning experience. Work experience should not be confused with volunteering, see below.

Work experience placements arise from:

- Organised student work experience placement schemes as part of a college or university course, with an agreed learning programme, not covered by the Health Education South West Learning and Development Agreement (see 4. above);
- Programmes organised by schools or colleges for a short period of work experience (usually no more than 2 weeks) for school or college students normally under the age of 18;
- Schemes organised by the employer. The Trust may wish to run particular work experience schemes where there is an identified need to develop skills and interest in roles in a particular area or profession (see 5. above);
- National schemes organised by the NHS;
- Individual requests for work experience may be made to the Trust, but managers should be aware that the Trust does not normally support individuals undertaking work experience outside of an agreed scheme (see 5. above).

Shadowing/Observers: There may be requests from individuals to shadow a Trust employee or to observe activities within the Trust. This may be acceptable for short periods of no more than two weeks. The individual will be required to sign a [confidentiality agreement](#).

Volunteers are unpaid members of the community who contribute their time, energy and skills to complement the work of paid staff. Whilst volunteers may gain valuable experience from their service, volunteering activity should not be confused with work experience as defined above. Full details about volunteering within the Trust are given in the Trust's [Volunteer Policy](#) and on Ourspace.

11. Associated and Related Procedural Documents

- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Risk Assessment Policy](#)
- [Disclosure and Barring Checks Policy](#)
- [Volunteer Policy](#)
- [Work experience criteria](#)

12. References

- Health Education South West Learning and Development Agreement

Version History				
Version	Date	Revision description	Editor	Status
1.01		Management First Draft considered at GNG on 28.02.12	KE	DRAFT
1.02	21.05.2012	Draft discussed at Professional Council on 21.05.12.	KE	DRAFT
1.03	29.05.2012.	GNG agreed draft of policy and that it should be sent out for Management Consultation.	KE	DRAFT
1.04	27.07.2012	Amendments made following management consultation	KE	DRAFT
1.05	06.08.2012	Amendments agreed by GNG on 31 July 2012	TW	DRAFT
1.06	08.08.2012	Amendments agreed by MWMG on 8 August 2012	TW	DRAFT
1.07	21.09.2012	Policy approved by Employee Strategy and Engagement Committee (ESEC) on 21 September 2012 with a one year review period.	TW	APPROVED
2.00	20.09.2013	Amendments agreed by GNG following one year review of policy	TW	DRAFT
2.01	14.11.2013	Amendments agreed by ESEC.	ADP	APPROVED
2.01	18.10.2016	Amendments agreed by GNG following a review of the policy.	CY	Approved
3.0	01/11/2016	Approved by associate director of HR		Approved
3.1	06/11/2019	Extended until end November 2019	Approved Deputy HRD	Approved