

# LEARNING BY DOING

## A toolkit for employers offering young people technology work experiences

Considering hosting a young person for **work experience** or a **Foundation Apprenticeship**?

This 5-minute read is for you.

This guide, along with [planning templates](#) and [tutorial video](#) is aimed at **Digital Economy** employers operating in Scotland who are considering offering experiential learning opportunities to young people still at school.



You'll be familiar with the idea of work experience, where a young person spends a week in a business during early secondary school.



**‘Workplace Experiential Learning’** is how we talk about this now, there’s more of a focus on personal development, and the development of gaining skills through practical experience.

Most young people don't have a realistic perception of what it's like to work in a modern, technology focused company. Scotland has a **Digital Economy** which includes every business that uses technology to communicate, create, consume, innovate and trade.

Offering experiential learning is offering a chance for a young person to form a **positive first impression**, **build their confidence**, and allow them to get a flavour of what it's like in the world of work, and particularly the **Digital Economy**.



By offering experiential learning opportunities, you can help them develop skills specific to the **Digital Economy**:

#### *Digital Transition*

Including ecommerce, trading online, and understanding the value of business data.

#### *Professional digital skills*

The skills and tools used in cyber security, software development, engineering, and cloud security.

#### *Digital Adoption*

Including key business tools like email, calendars, and working with data and documents.

#### *Integrated digital skills*

Where traditionally non-technical roles can be enhanced by using digital skills.

In addition to job specific technical skills, a trainee will develop **core meta-skills** in self-management, social intelligence, and innovation.

# Picking an approach

**Foundation Apprenticeships** typically involve a school pupil spending one day per week at your business during the school year, while continuing to study relevant subjects at school the rest of the week. **These last between 1 and 2 years depending on the level.**



There are 15 types (called frameworks) of Foundation Apprenticeship available, the most applicable in the digital economy sector are likely to be Software Development, Hardware and System Support, Creative and Digital Media, and Business Skills.

The learning provider will work with you to determine the right timing and length of placement of Apprenticeship.

**Work experience placements** are short-term and much more flexible.

A pupil could attend your workplace full-time for **one week, one day per week for a month**, or even **one afternoon a week** for a couple of months.

It doesn't need to be complicated, in most cases there's very little administration required, and there's lots of support available from organisations like **Skills Development Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce**, and your **Local Authority**.

# What's in it for us?

Offering workplace experiential learning isn't purely philanthropic, there's benefits to your organisation too.

Through offering workplace experiential learning, you'll build a relationship with **schools, education providers**, and local representatives from **careers services**. You'll be well placed to access talent and young people when it comes to recruitment campaigns.



Listing placement opportunities will expose young people to your brand, and industry. Pupils will discuss their experience with friends, so familiarity is being built even with those who don't take up the opportunity. It's a chance to create a **positive first impression** of a generous company that supports young people.



Recruitment of early-stage positions is risky, there is high turnover with new recruits with little experience or sector knowledge. Young people who partake in experiential learning often decide to **pursue a career in the same field**. You (and the young person) have had an extended chance to test out the relationship and fit.



# What's in it for us?

## Staff upskilling

Hosting a young person is a great opportunity to allow your staff to develop their own skills in things like **line management, mentoring, and coaching.**

The presence and fresh outlook of a young person can be a positive form of disruption, they'll bring **fresh perspectives, insights, and enthusiasm** which will rub off on your staff.



## Social responsibility

Providing workplace experiential learning is a firm commitment from your organisation that it is **outward looking, supportive, and active in the local community.**

You can create a positive message about the impact of your brand, while meeting **Corporate Social Responsibility** commitments, while ALSO making a **positive difference in the lives of young people.**

# What if..?

It's normal to feel nervous, or apprehensive, about what could go wrong. Let's bust some myths.

**"...we don't have the right insurance for a young person?"**

There's a common misconception that you need specialist insurance for young people attending work placements, but your existing **Public Liability Insurance** should cover placement trainees.

Your local authority can advise on any exceptional circumstances.

**"... we don't have the capacity to make 100 risk assessments?"**

It's unlikely you'll need to create any new risk assessments.

For the purposes of trainees on placement, health and safety procedures, protocols, and risk assessments will apply as they do to other staff. If the young person is under the age of 16, any relevant risk assessments will need to be shared with their parents.

The local authority will generally request to see and review relevant risk assessments regardless of pupil age.

# What if..?

## **“... I can’t give them access to systems?”**

Many of your computer systems will have strict access controls, and it’s possible you’ll not be able to give them the same access as a member of staff.

That’s okay, it’s still possible to have a representative experience without it.

Imagine you’re setting your trainee a task to program a chatbot for customer service. Your trainee doesn’t need to use real data, and their project doesn’t need to be connected to a real system.

Providing a safe and comfortable environment where it’s okay to make mistakes without causing trouble is important.

## **“...we have agile working patterns?”**

Does your team tend to work in sprints, or follow a fixed pattern of work? Why not make this a learning experience in and of itself.

It will be new, novel, and a great demonstration of the need for communication, teamwork.



## **“...we only do one thing, and it’s dry?”**

Some Digital Economy companies are very specialised in the nature of what they do.

It’s still possible to provide a rounded learning experience, focus on exposing young people to a variety of skills, not roles.



# What if..?

## **“...I’m not confident about my equalities and diversity commitments?”**

It’s important that all prospective trainees are treated equally and fairly. You should avoid stereotyping, or other common biases.

Some young people will require additional support in school, this could be in the form of adaptations to learning materials, or direct support from a member of staff.

If the young person has a support worker, then they should also attend the placement to support the young person.

## **“...we aren’t PVG members?”**

You generally don’t need to have staff join the PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) scheme to host a trainee, an exception exists for the purposes of work placements.

This is something your local authority representative can advise on.



## **“...they behave unprofessionally?”**

It’s unlikely anything will go wrong, but general discipline procedures can be followed if necessary.

If it comes to it, a placement can be terminated early. Your local authority is here to help.

# Hacks for successful experiential learning

Before producing your own plans and activities, here's some good ideas you could take onboard.

## Application Process

Recruitment may be handled by your local authority, or the school directly. This doesn't preclude you from providing experiential learning of this important process. You could hold a **mock interview**, or ask for **cover letters**. This is a great way to understand the motivations, wants, and needs of the young person.

## Mock Contract

Before, or at the start of the placement, follow an onboarding process, and present the young person with a [mock contract](#). This is where you can share expectations about punctuality, appropriate behaviour, rules for IT systems, and health and safety.

## Induction Activities

Induction doesn't need to be boring, why not make it in the form of a **scavenger hunt** where the young person has to ask around to 'find the person responsible for first aid', or learn the 'location of the kitchen'. It's a great opportunity for the young person to build relationships and meet your team.

# Hacks for successful experiential learning

## Think Broadly - Develop Meta-skills

It's really tempting to focus on role-specific skills, tools, and knowledge.

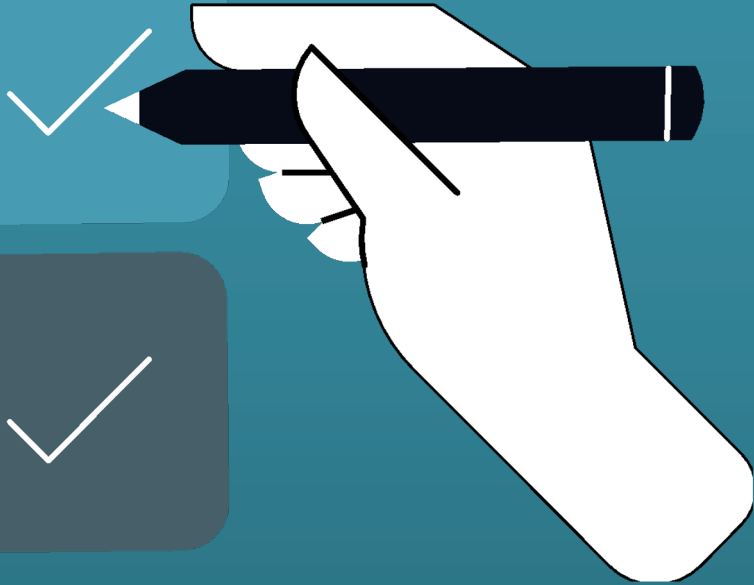
Trainees also need to develop their transferrable, or meta, skills.

Skills Development Scotland has a [meta-skills model](#) with 12 skills spread across three pillars - Innovation, Self-Management, and Social Intelligence.

## Trainee Log/Blog

To assist the trainee (and you!) keep track of their activities, learning, and experiences it's a good idea to ask them to keep a log.

This could take the form of a traditional logbook, a [blog](#), or an infographic.



# Advertising & Recruiting

The path to marketing and recruiting depends on your offer, but there's always support available.

**APPRENTICESHIPS.SCOT**

From Skills Development Scotland

## Foundation Apprenticeships

A **learning provider** will be your main point of contact in coordinating a Foundation Apprenticeship, they might be a college, or private organisation. Their job is support you as the employer as well as ensure the Apprentice meets their learning requirements.

The first step to offering a Foundation Apprenticeship is to find a suitable learning provider. You'll want to find one who deliver the right framework, and who are in the right location.

You can find learning providers on [apprenticeships.scot](https://apprenticeships.scot)

apprenticeships.scot is a service provided by Skills Development Scotland to support learners and employers. They also host the largest jobs board of Apprenticeships in Scotland.

# Advertising & Recruiting

## Short Placements

Most local authorities coordinate work experience opportunities for their schools. The process will vary, but a local contact will take care of explaining everything.

To make logistics easier for schools, it is likely that the dates a placement will be fixed. However, different schools within the local authority will hold their work experience at different times of the year.

[WorkIt](#) is a website that 25 of the 32 local authorities use. You can advertise opportunities, and a local representative will be in touch.

A more flexible option is to advertise directly to teachers and young people. [Marketplace](#) is an established platform for advertising opportunities and teachers across the country have access to it. It is advised to avoid term time for ad-hoc opportunities.



# Structuring a placement

It might feel overwhelming creating tasks, activities, and projects to keep your trainee busy.

Making a timetable is an important part of preparing for a trainee. It's also a good way to making sure the programme is balanced, and that you're maximising the workplace experiential learning on offer.

Once you start to break it down with the core activities you'll find there's probably less time than you expect.

Here's a [sample timetable](#) for a trainee in an **insurance company**.

Time	Monday	Tuesday
Early AM	Starting Interview Health & Safety Briefing	Attend Stand-up  Shadowing Underwriting team (see how personalised quotes are produced)  Create automation routine that auto-populates a Word document from an Excel spreadsheet
Late AM	Induction Scavenger Hunt  (meet the team and get to know the building)	Prompt engineer an AI tool to read the last 3 Annual Reports and identify an achievement from each
...	...	...

# Finishing the placement

End the workplace experiential learning experience on a high. Here's some tips.

## Presentation

If your trainee has been working on a project, arrange a small supportive audience to attend a short presentation on their work.

This will provide motivation for the project, and develop their skills in writing and delivering presentations, a key skill.

If they've not been working on a project, have them create a short presentation on what they learned and achieved during the placement.

## Handover Meeting/Exit Interview

An exit interview will be a new and novel experience for your trainee. Framing it as a handover meeting will demonstrate that you value the work they've done, and that they've contributed to something useful that will continue to develop.

This will be useful learning for you as an employer to understand what they enjoyed, valued, and what might need to change in future.

## Staff Survey

Your trainee will have interacted with all sorts of people from across the organisation, gathering their feedback while it's fresh will really help you out in future.

