Hosting a placement is great for employers because it provides an opportunity to 'give back' and support a young person, it might find the organisation a great future employee, and it allows existing employees to have experience managing people. Here are some tips on how to run a successful placement programme.

The legals

Many employers are nervous about hosting a placement because they are worried about 'the legals' - Risk Assessments, Health & Safety, Insurance and complying with the GDPR or related data protection legislation.

It's simple: from insurance and legal perspectives young people on placements are considered the same as normal employees, so your normal policies cover you. You just need to make sure that what you have in place is appropriate for the age of the people you host on the placement. For example, check that your Risk Assessment is appropriate for people who might not be familiar with workplaces.

Read more about the legals in our guide 'Placements: the legals explained'.

A single lead

Like any project, things work better with a single point of contact who oversees coordinating it. For a placement you should have one person who is in charge of it, and this should be someone who has sufficient time (eg to answer emails promptly) and clout (to make necessary things happen, eg to invite a student to attend a particular meeting). On UniFrog's Placements tool, we call this person the Employer placement lead.

Explain all the basics

Remember that the young person you host will likely be used to being told when they should eat, go to the toilet, or move from doing one task to another. At the very beginning of the placement, you should do an induction with the student where you cover all the basics of how to act in your workplace, to the level of where the toilet is, and where in the building they can go.

Safety

- Before a student begins a placement with you, you will have checked that your Risk Assessment and Health & Safety policy appropriately take into account hosting a placement. For more info, check out our guide, 'Placements: the legals explained'.

- When you induct the student at the beginning of the placement, explain all the risks present in your workplace and how they are controlled, checking that they understand what they have been told, and that they know how to raise any health and safety concerns.

  Clearly, the amount of time you spend on this should depend on how risky the environment is - a student might already be familiar with a normal office workplace, whereas in a higher risk environment, like a construction, manufacturing or agricultural environment, you will need to have very carefully thought through how to mitigate risks, and you need to be very sure that students know how to avoid harm to themselves and others.

- You need to decide how much training for the student is necessary, taking into account how risky the workplace is, what tasks they are going to be doing, and the student themselves - for example, how mature they are and if they have any special needs.

- Young people are likely to need more supervision than adults. Good supervision will help you get a clear idea of a young person's capabilities.

- Young people on placements are considered the same as employees in health and safety law, and as such have a duty to take care of their own health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by their actions. This includes co-operating with you by listening carefully, following instructions, using any safety equipment you provide, and taking part in relevant training.

  If a student misbehaves significantly or you are otherwise concerned that they are a danger to themselves or others, you should contact the school placement coordinator, and if necessary stop the placement.

Safeguarding

Some employers are put off from hosting students on placements because they worry about 'safeguarding' - this should not happen! Safeguarding means nothing more than putting common sense things in place to help keep young people safe.

Here is some best practice to follow:

- The Employer placement lead (and whoever else is directly interacting with the young person on the placement) should be mature in their attitudes and able to establish a good professional relationship with young person/people;

- Ideally a young person should never be on their own with an adult without another adult present, so - for example - if you are doing a 1-1 meeting with a student, do this in a place with other people around

- Just like with any colleague, physical contact should be avoided where possible, with the understanding that sometimes it is unavoidable, for example when showing someone how to operate machinery;

- If a student doesn't show up to their placement, or they have an accident during the placement, or the student commits a significant act of indiscipline, you should let the school placement coordinator (Nicola Whyte) know right away (you will have their contact information in all the emails sent to you regarding the placement you are hosting).

- If a young person confides to an adult personal information that gives rise to concern for the young person's safety or the safety of others, the adult should:
  - Be open to listening and be non-judgemental;
  - Not promise to keep anything secret;
  - Write down what the young person said in as much detail as they can, and pass on the information to the School placement coordinator.

- Check out this guide on how adults should communicate online with young people.

What's the student trying to get out of the placement?

Placements are much more successful if you and the student are clear on what the student is trying to get out of the placement. A young person might not have a very thought through or realistic idea of what this might be - so you should help them get clear on it!

To this end, here are some ***broad areas*** where a placement could be useful. Obviously, students should have much more specific goals - these are just to get the thinking going:

- **Careers education and guidance**: raising the student's awareness of different careers, getting them thinking about what matters to them in a career, learning the requirements of particular employment sectors
- **Attainment in individual subjects / qualifications**: enhancing the student's understanding and skills in things that are relevant to the subjects / qualifications that they are studying at the moment
- **Developing skills**: learning about and practising personal and professional skills like confidence teamwork, problem solving, attention to detail
- **Learning about work**: understanding social, economic and industrial issues, citizenship and enterprise
- **Health and safety**: raising the student's awareness of health and safety requirements in the workplace
- **Evidencing activities**: collecting evidence of things they've done that they're proud about, which they can use in later applications for education, training and employment
- **Motivation and achievement**: raising the student's motivation and self-esteem
- **Networking**: developing a professional network of people they can reach out to for help
- **Getting a job with you**: if you're super impressed by them, perhaps you would be interested in hiring them later...

Structure

The best placements are well structured. They involve students having:

1. **Clear targets / learning outcomes**. Ideally in advance of the placement, the student and employer lead should discuss what the student wants to get out of the placement in terms of the experiences they want to have, and the skills they want to develop. This should shape what the student then does in terms of their overarching project, what they observe, and the conversations they have with different people at the employer.

2. **An induction**. Begin the placement with a version of the induction you would give a normal new starter in your organisation. Remember that a young person will probably be less familiar with a workplace than an older person, so be careful to explain the basics - things like who they are reporting to, where the toilets are, when they can take breaks, who to contact if they're going to be late,

what to do if there's a fire, etc. Here is our suggested [Induction checklist](#).

3. **An introductory meeting** between the employer placement lead and the student (a chance for the student to ask basic questions, and for the student and employer lead to be totally clear on what the student wants to get out of the placement, and what will happen each day). This could be done at the same time as the induction (which is more about the logistics of the workplace and how the placement will run), or you could do it soon afterwards.

4. **An overarching project**. The student should always have some of their own work to be getting on with. It should align with the student's interests, allow them some autonomy, be relevant to what the employer does, and should build to a final project. In an ideal world, it will actually be useful for the employer. (Eg at the end of the placement, the student will do a presentation to senior staff on how the company can better engage with young customers).

5. **Sessions to support with the project**. (Eg check-in meetings as the student does their research, and creates their presentation).

6. **Shadowing different people in the company**. (Eg sitting in on a sales meeting, a progress meeting on a long term project, and a customer training session).

7. **Sit down meetings with different people in the company**. (Eg a student could discuss with the person they just shadowed what that person's role entails, whether the meeting went well, and also what that person's own career path has been).

8. **A debrief session** between the employer lead and the student. (A chance for both parties to learn - what could the student do to become more employable? And what could the employer do to be better at hosting placements?)

Providing an overview to the student in advance

Before the start of the placement, it's a great idea to provide students with an overview of what they will be doing during the placement, and also let them know things like to whom they will be reporting, and what time to arrive.

Writing this can also help you think through the logistics of how you'll run the placement. To write the overview thoroughly, cover all of the points in the 'Structure' section above.

If you're using the Unifrog Placements tool, in the Employer initial form you'll complete the 'Overview of the placement' field - we'll send this to the student so they are clued up before the start date.

Here's an example of a good placement overview, for a placement at an imaginary marketing firm:

On your first day come to the main reception at 10am and ask for me. I'll come and pick you up.

We'll start with an induction where I'll cover health and safety things, and logistics like where the toilets are when lunch is. I'll tell you lots about what the company does, and about my role at the company. We'll also talk about what your main objectives are for the week.

On your first day I'm going to be setting you your own project to work on throughout the week, which will end on Friday afternoon with a presentation to me and some of my colleagues. The presentation will be about what the company can do to better market our services to young people. You can work on this whenever you aren't doing something else. At the end of each day we'll have progress meetings on how you're doing with the project.

Each day you will also have a meeting with someone in a different role in the company, and to help you structure these conversations we'll together come up with the questions you can ask them, and you'll write them in the placements journal. You'll also sit in on some meetings that people in the team are doing with each other. Each person already knows when they're talking to you – they'll pick you up from your desk.

On the Thursday I'm doing a presentation to some clients who are visiting our office which you'll sit in on. To make things more challenging, I'm going to task you with taking notes of the meeting – don't worry this is just to see how you get on, we'll also have someone else in the team taking notes!

On Friday afternoon you'll do your presentation to me and some of my colleagues. Afterwards we'll do a debrief session where we can both give each other feedback on how the week went - I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say!

Using Unifrog's Placements tool

Unifrog's placements tool is designed to make it much easier to handle the admin behind placements. Here's a guide on how it works in detail, and below are the most important bits as far as employers are concerned.

- In a nutshell

The tool is essentially a series of forms that have to be filled out sequentially. Finishing one form triggers an email to the next person in the chain to fill out the subsequent form.

- Getting the ball rolling

  The first form is filled in by the student. It asks basic information about the placement, including when it's happening, where, and with whom. Really important here is that the student enters the correct email address for the 'Employer placement lead' - the person at the employer who is leading on the admin of the placement.

  The second form (the 'Employer initial form') is filled in by the Employer placement lead. It asks more information about the placement - such as for an overview of what the student will do on the placement, how risky the work environment will be, and it checks that the employer has a Health & Safety policy, a Risk Assessment, and appropriate insurance.

  For all in person placements, the employer needs to actually provide their Employers' liability insurance. If the student has said they have special needs, illnesses or injuries that might affect the placement, or if the employer says that workplace represents above average risks, or that they've never hosted a placement before, the employer also needs to provide their Health & Safety policy, and their Risk Assessment.

- A speedy process

  - If an employer officially partners with Unifrog, they can:

    Upload to the Unifrog system information to do with their Employers' liability insurance, H&S policy, and Risk Assessment - meaning that employer placement leads at this employer don't need to provide these each time they complete a form.

    Add 'templates' of specific work experiences to their partner profile. Then when someone at the employer is completing an Employer initial form, they can choose to use one of the templates, which auto-populates the form with the template information. A template can be very detailed, eg specifying a particular start and end date, placement overview, and eating arrangements, or it could only include a few bits of standard information.

- o If an Employer placement lead works at an employer that has not partnered with Unifrog, but the employer placement lead has hosted a placement on Unifrog within the last 6 months:

  To speed up the process the Unifrog system automatically brings through many of their previous answers into their subsequent Employer initial forms. Here are the answers the system automatically completes (all of which can be edited within the form):
    - Job title
    - Phone number (this will override whatever the student entered here)
    - Business's/ organisation's main sector
    - Number of employees
    - Has your business / organisation hosted a placement before. This is always set as 'Yes'
    - Languages students need to be able to speak
    - Dress code
    - Working hours
    - Eating and refreshment arrangements
    - Employers' Liability Insurance
    - Risk Assessment
    - Covid safety guidance
    - Health & Safety policy
    - Data protection and privacy law

- After the placement

  Employers get the chance to give their opinion on the student and the hosting process via an 'Employer review form'. For placements with no end date, we send the form one month after the start date; for placements with an end date, we send it the morning after the end date.

  One part of the Employer form asks the employer if in the future they would be up for hosting another student from the relevant school / college. If they say 'yes', they will appear to teachers on a 'Placements contacts database' - ready to be contacted again in the future.