

BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

The Responsible
Business Network
Northern Ireland

Virtual Work Experience Toolkit

ONLINE ROUTE TO EXPERIENCES OF WORK



TOOLKIT

QUALITY WORK EXPERIENCE IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

Work placements can be a great leveller for employers looking to diversify their workforce, invest in their communities and nurture future talent. As employers adapt work placements within the ‘new normal’, this guide sets out some ways to ensure they offer an accessible, inclusive, and quality experience for participants.

Introduction

The immediate threat of COVID-19 continues to affect the health of the economy, and there is a significant risk of widening inequalities as the impact of the pandemic is experienced disproportionately by different groups.

The futures of young people leaving the education system remains uncertain. As well as school students facing significant disruption to their education, it is projected that three years after leaving full-time education, the employment rate of today’s graduates will be 13% lower than they would have been without the crisis.

Excluded groups are also experiencing the impact of the pandemic on employment outcomes. At the start of 2020, record employment rates meant businesses were having to look beyond their usual talent pipelines to consider people facing barriers to employment. Despite many excluded groups having the skills businesses need, barriers such as experience of homelessness, mental health problems, criminal convictions or refugee status can lead to candidates being overlooked. In the current climate, this is even more likely, regardless of a candidate’s ability to do the job.

Work placements across all ages provide a crucial insight into the world of work, opening up new talent pipelines for employers and giving

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employees the opportunity to invest in their communities.

Whether it is delivering a virtual workshop, recording a behind the scenes video, a three-day work experience delivered online, or a placement with face-to-face interaction, it is vital that businesses continue to offer work placements that provide real benefit for participants and employers alike.

This toolkit supports employers to ensure that all work placements offered are of a high quality and provide real value for the business, participants, and society. This guide draws together expertise from Business in the Community's long history of practical engagement with businesses, schools and excluded groups as well as our **Work Inspiration, Age at Work, #Workitout and Employability Support Programmes**.

WHY WORK EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Work experience is a critical enabler and leveller for people of all ages and backgrounds to develop the skills, insights, and practical experience they need to access good jobs.

Improving the quality of work experience – whether that is through placements, internships, traineeships, or apprenticeships – is vital to protecting the employment prospects of young people and excluded groups. It also provides value for businesses, ensuring that the workforce of the future has the experience and skills needed to thrive.

Work placements give people the opportunity to experience the world of work, develop their confidence and demonstrate their potential. Many employers have also experienced the benefits of providing work placements for excluded groups, discovering untapped talent pipelines, increasing their business' diversity and inclusive culture and improving their reputation.

For School Pupils

There is a duty for schools to provide work experience for young people, although the systems and duties in place vary across the UK. Some employers have been able to adapt quickly to the challenges posed by COVID-19 by providing virtual work experience opportunities, but not everyone has been able to move as fast. As we consider the impact of COVID-19, and the legacy that it may leave, businesses from all sectors will need to adapt work placements to ensure school students (particularly those without the networks or

connections to give them a foot in the door) have access to the same breadth of opportunities that were available before COVID-19.

The Northern Ireland Assembly set out its strategic vision for Careers Education and Guidance in 2015. The strategy details 5 policy commitments, of which one directly references work experience. The commitment states that “work experience for young people, schools and employers will be improved to ensure equality of opportunity and improve the administrative process of organising work experience opportunities.”

Business in the Community NI is funded by the Department of Education to support the Department's work experience commitments through the Work Inspiration programme (physical work experience is currently paused).

For Young People

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on young people. This is largely due to the large number of young people employed in sectors that were significantly impacted by lockdown – such as hospitality and retail. By October 2020 the unemployment rate was for 16-24 year olds was sitting at 11.8%, doubling since March 2020.

Whether school leavers, university graduates or previously NEET (not in education, employment, or training) young people, the employment market is likely to be challenging. With the impact on retail and hospitality likely to be felt for months to come, many young people will be applying for roles in alternative sectors with the potential to be hampered by a lack of previous work experience. By providing work placements to young people, employers can help to ensure they are developing the skills needed for the future and building a diverse workforce.

For Older People

By 2020 one in three workers will be over 50, and by 2030 half of all adults in the UK will be over 50. Understanding the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population is vital if we all want to create productive, innovative, and inclusive multi-generational teams as we all lead longer working lives.

It is therefore vitally important that businesses support older workers to remain or return to work.

For Excluded Groups

Work placements can be a vital connecting point for employers and people facing barriers to employment such as homelessness, current work experience, criminal convictions, and mental health problems. These barriers can make it difficult to succeed in many mainstream recruitment processes, leading to a vicious cycle which can result in long-term unemployment or social exclusion.

Work placements give people from excluded groups the opportunity to experience the world of work, develop their confidence and demonstrate their potential. Many employers have also experienced the benefits of providing work placements for excluded groups, discovering untapped talent pipelines, increasing their business diversity and inclusive culture, and improving their reputation.

65% of organisations taking part in inclusive employment projects reported this had a positive impact on their corporate reputation.

A FAIR PROCESS

One of the first steps that all businesses need to take when offering work experience is to ensure a fair process which does not unfairly advantage certain people and that full efforts have been made to attract diverse candidates.

Work experience is found to be the most valued careers intervention for all young people by teachers. However, sustained engagement such as work experience or mentoring were viewed as most effective for lower-achieving young people. It is important for businesses to recognise that people from disadvantaged backgrounds can lack the social capital and family networks to identify and access high quality work-related learning. Evidence from schools has shown that there are disparities in the quality of advice and access to opportunities for girls, black, Asian and ethnic minority students, and those with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Linking diversity and future skills strategies to education outreach activities can complement future recruitment plans. Practical steps, such as ensuring equal numbers of men and women and ensuring work experience is also accessible to disabled students can promote your business to groups who may be underrepresented in your workplace. BITC would recommend creating a policy or charter to help guide your approach.

Target disadvantaged schools or young people

To ensure your activity is targeted at the most disadvantaged, seek out those schools which have a Free School Meal (FSM) percentage higher than the national average, which acts as a proxy to identify young people from lower income families.

A work experience broker will be able to identify the most disadvantaged schools and explain which indicators they are using or they may be working with groups in particular postcode areas. This does not mean that you are disadvantaging students /schools/organisations who do not meet FSM or

postcode criteria, you should just ensure that you are engaging with as wide a participation as possible in your activity, considering other limitations that may apply such as subjects or qualifications.

Reach excluded groups through partnership

People who face barriers to work may struggle to access opportunities through mainstream channels. We recommend partnering with organisations that can help you reach disadvantaged groups and removing any barriers to participation such as restrictions on people with criminal convictions or limiting factors for people with disabilities.

Create a clear application process

To provide a real taster of what it is like to apply for a job, you may decide to create a job description for the work experience placement(s) and an application form. Providing interviews is also a great way to select and prepare a student for a placement, especially if it has not been possible to conduct any pre-placement activities. When conducting interviews, it is important to provide feedback so that interviewees can view the experience positively, regardless of the outcome. Interviews can be delivered virtually.

In each step of your process, try and remove as many barriers to participating as possible whilst not diluting the experience for the participants and your organisation as the placement host.

HOW AND WHO CAN WE HELP

Our goal is to raise aspirations, support skills development and enable everyone to engage fully in society and to prosper to the best of their abilities.

We will do this by:

- Providing role models for people of all ages and the most disadvantaged to raise aspirations, support educational attainment and skills development
- Engaging with business and key partners to broker support for local communities and schools with personal resilience and mental-health issues
- Engaging and supporting business to be more inclusive in relation to their recruitment and training practices
- Supporting businesses to engage with local communities through volunteering and mentoring
- Working with companies and future employees (including the most disadvantaged) on campaigns to develop skills for the workplace and address differences in attitudes and expectations

Age at Work (50+)

The Age at Work project works with businesses through the Still Ready for Work programme to help support people aged 50+ to remain or return to work. This consists of bespoke programmes both virtual and practical, designed around business recruitment needs or aspirations and workshops and one to one support for participants.

Businesses can benefit from a consultancy session from a recruitment professional to help design a bespoke programme. Any developed programmes are delivered by and facilitated by recruitment and training specialists.

Individuals can sign up to one or all of the workshops which cover topics that can help you to seek out and secure the employment you want,

including: CVs & Skills, Job Search & Applications; Interviews; Digital Skills; and more.

All workshops are delivered by professional trainers and will be lively and interactive and participants are welcome to join in as much as you want, or just listen and learn.

Work Inspiration

The Work Inspiration programme works with employers to develop quality, interactive experiences of work to help young people develop skills for the workplace and make informed subject and career choices. It is funded by the Department of Education NI and is open to all students in Northern Ireland studying up to a Level 3 (A Level) qualification. We can support targeting of students to ensure that participation is fair and equitable.

We can help design and manage work experience for companies whilst helping ensure students can secure 'experiences of work' relevant to the vocational interests and career aspirations.

Lockdown and school closures in 2020/2021 resulted in many young people missing out on valuable work experience opportunities and we are seeking employers to develop online/virtual work experience and useful resources to support this activity.

[Speak to us if you would like to develop work experience, open days, careers talks or other ideas you may have for virtual activities.](#) In addition, we continue to prepare for a return to 'on premises' work experience activity when it is safe to do so.

[More information is available on the Work Inspiration website.](#)

Young Persons Employment Programme / Step Into Employment Programme

These two programmes help and support people who are unemployed or economically inactive and who are engaged on a 10-week employability programme with Bryson FutureSkills.

Extended periods of unemployment for an individual can affect future employment prospects and are closely associated to ill-health and poverty.

Employers who host work placements have the opportunity to raise the aspirations of people who are unemployed, by giving them practical and relevant insights into the world of work. Offering work experience helps participants develop or re-fresh skills and build confidence.

#WorkItOut (#WIO)

Business in the Community, in partnership with First Housing, is delivering #WorkItOut – a unique education, training & employability programme in the North West of Northern Ireland.

#WorkItOut works with disadvantaged 16- to 25-year-olds who are homeless, or in danger of becoming homeless, and have been referred to First Housing for support. The project supports those young people who wish to engage in education, skills development, employment opportunities and training, or completed existing courses.

#WorkItOut is led by its young participants and aims to empower them to make choices about their own future, providing the support, guidance and opportunities to help them achieve whatever it is they wish to do.

As part of the #WIO project, Business in the Community matches businesses mentors with a young person, to provide support and encouragement for their young mentee who maybe be starting or continuing their journey into employment, training or education. Mentors are key to supporting the growth of their mentee's confidence and self-esteem around employability.

[Find out more about #WIO by downloading our flyer.](#)

CHECKLIST

The Work Experience toolkit provides you with support to consider why, when and how you may wish to provide a virtual experience of work. Below is a checklist to be used after reading the toolkit as a quick reference. It shouldn't be used without the toolkit.

ASK YOURSELF OR OTHERS IN YOUR BUSINESS		CHECK
1. What type of virtual experience of work are you able to offer and to whom?	Type of experience. Can you offer one day per week, a one-week block, a workplace visit, a combination of all three? This would also need discussion with the school/ broker/organisation.	
	Agree why you want to do this. Eg future recruitment needs, development of staff etc	
	Establish when the business may be able to support	
	Create placement descriptions (include content, timetable and duration)	
	Create pre-work ideas to discuss with the school or organisation	
	Consider what health & safety considerations, liability insurance, child protection etc you will need in place	
	Gain internal buy-in from senior leaders and relevant volunteer staff	
2. Working with a school/ broker/ organisation to source participants	Identify when participants can be released for an experience of work	
	Identify the target audience you want to work with	
	Share / discuss health & safety of the participant ie; if school students may require written consent from parents, child protection etc	
	Agree and set 'pre-work' if required, including when it will be reviewed	
	What will be the 'application' process for work experience e.g. open to all, those selected by school/ broker/ organisation or an application form	
	Set dates and agree with school, volunteers etc	
3. Arrange an internal planning meeting	Allocate volunteer tasks e.g the buddy, the programme co-ordinator	
	Utilise the tools available such as the buddy diary, the Three Insights, the sample timetable etc, include logistics, health & safety etc	
4. Pre-meeting with participant	Work experience - provide participants with the opportunity to meet staff (particularly the buddy) and ask questions about the placement prior to the start date (a virtual meeting), if required	
5. Deliver the placement	For work experience - arrange for the school/ broker/organisation to visit the participant during the placement (a virtual call/meeting)	
	Ensure all volunteers and the participant complete a feedback form	
	Ensure that participants gain an insight into the careers, recruitment, and selection processes for the business	

6. Evaluate, adapt and improve internally	Hold an internal meeting and review feedback forms	
	Conduct a debrief with the school/ broker/ organisation and participant	
7. Fast track participants into the recruitment process (age dependent and if applicable)	Liaise internally with those responsible for recruitment to 'flag' potential candidates	
8. Benefits to Employer By hosting work placements, your business will benefit by:-	Developing the supervisory and management skills of your current workforce	
	Enhancing your public profile by supporting your local community and becoming the "Employer of Choice"	
	Accessing a pool of hidden talent – people who bring a range of skills and offer enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to your business	
	Help raise the aspirations and positively influence the life of a young person	
	Promoting workforce diversity – enabling employers to achieve greater engagement with the community, and to promote the wide array of access routes into workplaces and support people in preparation for the world of work	
	Supports CR policy -the "right thing to do", be a "community" employer	
	Ensure and enhance the retention and development of skills and ultimately securing the future economy	
9. Benefits to Participant By hosting work placements, participants will benefit by:	Making an informed career decision and develop skills for the future	
	Have experience to discuss at interviews and can be used on application forms for jobs, UCAS or FE	
	Get a better understanding of the skills, abilities and qualities sought by employers	
	Bridge the gap between young people's expectations of the world of work and business reality	
	Develop self-confidence and self-esteem – sense of responsibility	
	Upskill and/or develop employability skills	
	Develop skills in team building, communication, interpersonal skills, problem solving, digital and presentation skills	
	Enhance your CV	

IDEAS FOR CONTENT

What could a virtual work experience include:

In advance have decided how much content is live, pre-recorded, or self-led in own time by participants. For example, a 3-day work experience could include 3 live one-hour sessions per day, supplemented by pre-recorded content, group work and completion of project activity. It is important to allow for regular breaks within the timetable both for staff and participants. Some suggested content below:

- Induction – what to expect, parameters/process, who to contact, timetable etc
- Overview - of organisation/business/sector (could include other external partners)
- Meet the people/Q&A session – live session focussing on a particular department/job e.g. dietician or engineer or an overview of all business functions e.g. work of a construction firm
- Day in the Life Of – include pre-recorded videos of people, teams, departments
- Virtual tour - of factory, workplace, office. Opportunity for participants to see 'behind the scenes'
- Interactivity - simulation, project/activity, quizzes/games, discussion sessions. Examples could be practical coding exercise, an ethics debate, delivering a 'pitch' for a new product, design a 'product/service' exercise, problem solving task. These could be developed as group or individual
- Journey into the organisation - how/where do you recruit, qualifications required
- Supported/mock interview session - tips and tricks, CV workshop, mock interview
- Skills sessions – this could be live or pre-recorded and cover areas such as emotional resilience, time management, presentation skills, money management, career planning
- Develop career storyboards – these could highlight individual staff careers. [Please have a look at some storyboards that we've created.](#)



GOING VIRTUAL

You may not be able to offer work placements physically; however, there are many options for delivering support virtually. For virtual work experience and work placements, it is important to consider the following:

Timings

We all know how tiring excessive screen time can be. Participants may not be used to spending long days in online meetings or staring at a screen. Running shorter days or half days will ensure the best participation and remember to schedule in regular breaks.

Technology

It is important to identify the right platform to deliver your virtual work placements. This will depend on several factors, including how interactive you want sessions to be, the level of safeguarding required, and how user-friendly the technology is. When you are working with a partner you will need to ensure any platform you use meets their safeguarding requirements and if delivering within a 'classroom' that the platform is compatible with their IT system.

It should also be recognised from the outset that young people do not have equal access to the technology required for a virtual work placement and that presuming so will disadvantage certain groups. Businesses should be prepared to work with partners to ensure that all participants are provided with the technology and equipment necessary even if this means providing the funding yourself.

Participation

It is important to remember that participants may not be familiar with using online platforms. While school students may have more experience through online learning, young jobseekers and excluded groups may find it very intimidating to join sessions online. All participants should be given written guidance on how to use your chosen platform and what is expected of them, and buddies should make sure they check in with

participants before and after the first session to identify if someone is struggling.

Work placements in a virtual world are a great chance for individuals to grow their confidence using a webcam and communicating online. However, some may need more time before they are comfortable turning their camera on or speaking, so we recommend making use of breakout groups, (however, if the work experience is with school children do consider any safeguarding issues), so everyone has a chance to contribute, and allowing participants to use a chat function. With regular check-ins, buddies can encourage participants to step outside their comfort zones.

Contact points

Without in-person contact, it can be more difficult to notice when someone may be struggling. The usual signs such as body language are likely to be missed, and it can be even harder for participants to express their concerns. Session organisers should make note of any participants they feel may be struggling and highlight this to buddies, who should be having regular check-ins with participants. Signs that a young person may be struggling may include becoming easily frustrated, getting distracted, or showing signs of anxiety or stress.

Balance

It is important to develop an experience that has a good balance of input (business speakers, virtual workplace tours, Q&A sessions) and challenges. Consider interspersing business input with tasks and challenges, which could be delivered by partner organisations. The size of your cohort should also be considered as sorting into smaller project groups for certain tasks may allow them to develop their teamwork skills and collaborate more directly.

OTHER LOGISTICS

What about the red tape?

Some businesses are put off from offering work placements because they fear work placements will involve too much bureaucracy and red tape. However, there is not nearly as much as you think.

Health & Safety

Employers are responsible for the health and safety of participants while on the placement. There are very few work activities that health and safety law prevents students from doing. Significant risks should be adequately controlled by:

1. Explaining the risks during induction, checking that participants understand and know how to raise health and safety concerns
2. Ensuring checks are proportionate to the environment the participants will be working in and that reasonable adjustments have been made which reflect their ability and maturity.

Latest advice on health and safety [Ensuring a safe work experience placement | nibusinessinfo.co.uk](#)

For schools using EA paperwork, the health and safety requirements are included within their policy [Work Experience Arrangements | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](#). This [guidance](#) is downloadable and information in relation to health and safety is on page 28 and 30. (PLEASE NOTE that some schools do not fall under their control).

Restrictions on work experience

Some activities young people are legally prohibited to do. Please refer to [Young people at work and the law](#) before offering any placements to students.

Risk assessment

The HSE has made it clear that existing arrangements for assessments and management of risks can be used and do not need to be repeated for work experience. Also, offices with fewer than five employees will not need a written risk

assessment, though it is good health and safety practice to have this in place.

If a company has not run a placement before, it is important to identify the needs of participants and review risk assessments before a placement begins. It is also important to understand that whilst COVID-19 exists there are risks and additional precautions that need to be considered.

For the latest advice on risk assessments visit: [Health and safety risk assessment | nibusinessinfo.co.uk](#) and more specifically for placement providers [Placement providers \(hse.gov.uk\)](#).

For schools using EA paperwork, their risk assessment requirements are included within their policy [Work Experience Arrangements | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](#). This [guidance](#) is downloadable and information in relation to risk assessments is on page 16 and 29. (PLEASE NOTE some schools do not fall under their control).

Liability insurance

Schools should provide Liability Insurance if their requirements are met, this will be provided by the Education Authority or their private insurer (the provider of the insurance will depend on the schools' managing authority). This [guidance](#) is downloadable and information in relation to liability is on page 22. (PLEASE NOTE some schools do not fall under their control).

Be mindful of your employers' liability insurance. Further information on NI Direct: [Ensuring a safe work experience placement | nibusinessinfo.co.uk](#)

Written consent

For school children, if the placement is during term time, the school must arrange written consent from the parent before the placement can begin. If working with a partner organisation, the partner should make sure that this is in place.

Child protection

Child protection is there for your protection as much as the young person's. Safeguarding is a term which is broader than 'child protection' and relates to the action companies take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Prior to the placement, a company should understand the school's child protection policy and define a safeguarding protocol with the school. A business offering work experience should already have policies and procedures in place and the school or work experience broker will want to

discuss these with you before beginning the process or selecting a pupil. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is also important for vulnerable young people and adults that may be participating in your programmes. Partner organisations should be able to support you with any safeguarding considerations, including training of volunteers and systems for raising safeguarding concerns.

APPENDIX 1 – WORK INSPIRATION

Work Inspiration, funded by the Department of Education, is an employer-led campaign that aims to make work experience more meaningful, relevant, and inspiring for young people. The programme responds to the gap between young people's expectations of the world of work and business expectations of new recruits. It combines the traditional 5-day work experience placements with other inspirational business education activities, careers insights, open days and any other inspirational, business-led idea.

Due to COVID-19, much 'in person' activity has been put on hold which has left thousands of students not being given the opportunity to secure an inspirational and informative 'experience of work' that meets their career aspiration. We are currently developing a range of online and interactive tools to help inspire young people about the world of work. As COVID-19 has impacted directly on physical work experience opportunities, we want to continue to inspire young people about the jobs that exist all around Northern Ireland.

Work Inspiration will discuss any opportunities that organisations would like to explore to inspire students. We want engagement to be relevant, meaningful and inspiring and there are many ways to get involved, which include:

Guidance and Skills Development

- Schools are asking for assistance to support students with:
- Completion of UCAS forms
- Advice and guidance on personal statements
- Interview skills preparation and mock interviews
- CV guidance
- Developing presentation skills
- Talks on resilience or importance of essential skills in the workplace

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Can be delivered by webinars, interactive sessions, pre-recorded sessions/videos, provision of resources or other online platforms. Some schools may be allowing external visitors.

Share the Story

Be the Inspiration. Share the story of careers in your organisation and those of your staff.

- [Career storyboards](#) of staff
- [Careers resource](#) on your organisation/sector
- [Short, snappy videos](#) of your organisation role models

Work Inspiration can provide sample questions for storyboards, some examples and guidance on content of videos. There is also a [brief](#) in relation to recording a video with some handy tips.

See next page for examples of some storyboards.

Virtual Opportunities

In the absence of traditional work experience develop interactive opportunities for students to explore your organisation virtually:

- Deliver work experience over a number of days/weeks/months with a selection of topics for students to engage in. Could be organisational or done by sector
- Virtual Careers Q&A with students (or pre-recorded)
- Virtual Careers Open Mornings – simulations, talks, scenario discussions, meet our people
- Virtual tour of the organisation linked to meet our people videos
- This could be linked to creation of for example, learning resources – such as virtual debating, essay competition, video or app creation.

QUALITY WORK EXPERIENCE IN A VIRTUAL WORLD





CLAIRE MCBRIDE
Managing Director:
Belfast

What was your education route?

I have a Master of Arts from the University of Glasgow. In the last 25 years, I have worked in independent film and television production and event management before moving into the IT sector 7 years ago. In all of these roles, I have undertaken CPD training but mainly learnt on the job from my peers and senior managers.

What job do you do now?

I am the Managing Director of the European operation based in Belfast. I report directly to our Founder and President, Tom Olenick. My role is multi-faceted which means that no two days are ever the same. I have overall responsibility for the success of the Belfast office. My pillars of responsibility can be broken down into the following categories: finance and accounting, business development and account management, people and talent, marketing and corporate and social responsibility.

What does your future look like?

This is a great question and one that I don't have an easy answer for! Since 2012, we've developed a talented team and a diverse work culture in Belfast. My focus is to enable and support my team in the continued growth and success of the Olenick office in Belfast.

What is the best piece of advice you could give your 16 year old self?

“Be Bold and Believe in Yourself.”

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Jordan Sproule
Diagnostic Radiographer

What does your job entail?

One of the best and most interesting things about being a radiographer is that there is so much variety. A general radiographer can take from simple breast x-rays of both breasts and up to screening during orthopaedic surgeries. We also perform fluoroscopy examinations and portable chest x-rays in intensive care units. We rotate through a busy A&E Department, offering a 24 hour service. In such a career there are lots of areas for progression. Radiographers can specialise in MR, CT, Interventional Radiology, Ultrasound, Reporting and more. Aside from using radiography equipment, my job also requires a level of attentiveness to our sick and vulnerable patients which is challenging, yet rewarding.

How did you get into this line of work?

During secondary school I attended an open day at my local hospital and through speaking to radiographers I gained an insight into their role on a daily basis. Always keen to pursue a career in line with health care and radiography was and still is the perfect fit. The combination of patient care, contributing to diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of pathologies and use of different specialist diagnostic imaging enticed me, as each day proposes a new challenge.

Outline your career to date

Starting my first job in the same month that I graduated from university was both daunting and exciting. I have worked in R&H for around 18 months, working as a Band 5 radiographer. Since then I have gained a wealth of experience. I play a crucial role in a multidisciplinary team, working closely alongside doctors, nurses and other health care professionals. Through my employment working in a fast paced, highly technological environment whilst providing a patient centred service. I have a particular interest in working in A&E. I have obtained skills which allow me to remain composed in order to maintain the highest standard of care while under pressure and working within strict time frames. Performing highly anticipated medical imaging in life and death situations has instilled an ability to withstand stress in difficult circumstances.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

After achieving the entry requirements for the course which is BSc at A level in the appropriate subjects and passing the Health Professions Admissions Test I gained a place at Ulster University to study 'Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging - BSc (Hons)'. I studied there for three years, during this time I spent a total of 40 weeks on clinical placement in different hospitals across Northern Ireland. In my opinion this is where I truly got a sense of what it is like to work as a radiographer and gained valuable experience helping to cement the theory I had been taught in class.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Qualities I believe are important to work as a Radiographer are:

- Excellent communication skills – both verbal and written
- Good time management
- Openness and honesty
- Kindness and patience
- Strong work ethic
- Team player

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I had to take 6 weeks off University to have ligament reconstruction surgery in my right knee following a football injury during 2nd year. This led to hobbling around university in crutches and a knee brace for the rest of term.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My greatest inspirations are not celebrities or famous people, but my family. My parents who encouraged me to work hard from a young age and gave me the platform to achieve my goals. Having two older brothers to share their life lessons has helped prepare me for adult life. I am extremely grateful to them all for the support they have provided through exams, first days and tough days at work.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

In hindsight I would share some words of encouragement with my 16 year old self. I would tell myself to eradicate any self-doubt that I have in regard to my studies, to appreciate the encouragement and assistance provided by my parents and teachers, and to continue to work hard in order to achieve my goals.

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Roisin Devlin
Nursing Modernisation
Manager
Workforce, Education
and Development

What made you decide to come into nursing/midwifery?

I wanted to be a nurse from I was little – my older relatives all lived together and many of them developed cancer and were nursed at home – as a family we provided the care for them and it made me want to do that for others – I never remember not wanting to nurse.

What does your role entail?

My role is really varied. I am responsible for nursing recruitment, development of the workforce, writing business cases. Prior to this I have worked in the Emergency Department for 20+ years, there I did everything from a Registered Nurse to a Senior Nurse, an Emergency Nurse Practitioner where I saw, treated and discharged patients, to a Lead Nurse where I managed the three emergency departments in the Trust to Clinical Manager where I managed unscheduled care. I also had a secondment into project posts.

What does a typical day look like?

I come in and have a look at my diary to prioritise my day. This may involve meetings with internal and external stakeholders. It can also be workforce clinics with different areas looking at their recruitment and how we can support them. That being said, something can happen that turns my day on its head and wipe out my day to do something that needs completed urgently.

What advice would you give someone coming into nursing?

Come in with a positive attitude, work hard, build your foundations and your reputation, that will carry you through your career. Be kind to people that you meet/care for, your attitude can make or break a person's day. It is a privilege to be able to care for people and share their difficult days.

Anything else you would like to add?

Take every opportunity that is given to you – If you are unhappy in an area that you work, move to one that makes you happy. There are lots of opportunities so take them and always remember why you wanted to be a nurse.

Work Inspiration
An initiative of

The Responsible Business Network
Northern Ireland





Jenny Gorman
HR
Business Partner



Work Inspiration
An initiative of

The Responsible Business Network
Northern Ireland

When working with young people it is vital that employers have considered safeguarding issues and depending on the delivery model, they may be asked for a policy by the school. This would take into consideration: breakout rooms, use of cameras, staff knowing importance of language and behaviour when engaging with young people and use of personal contact information. A designated 'buddy' that students can speak to and

should be provided to schools and parents/guardians.

Currently most organisations and schools are not pursuing 'on premises' work experience, however, many of the requirements within the Education Authority guidance will still be applicable for most students and schools – www.eani.org.uk

APPENDIX 2 - #WORKITOUT



What we offer - #WIO

- Improve the employability and training opportunities for young people by engaging private sector expertise.
- Utilise links with employers in the fields of training and employment; building and expanding upon these relationships for the benefit of young people who are not in employment, education, or training.
- Support direct employer engagement by facilitating employability interventions including using business mentors as positive role models to the young people.

- Offer work inspiration days, mentoring or employability sessions and ultimately raising the aspirations of the young people, #WIO aims to provide opportunities that may not regularly be open to those participating.



How does it work:

- BITC will work with the employer/business to plan and create a meaningful virtual work placement
- We will discuss the employer/business needs and those of the young person
- Virtual Work Placements can be from 1-2 weeks from 1-2 hours per day

What will a VWP look like and include:

- An insight into the business background – setting the scene
- ‘A day in the life of’ employees giving an insight into their employment roles
- A virtual workplace tour of the organisation/business
- Interactive project/task to complete whilst on placement



APPENDIX 3 – YOUNG PERSONS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME / STEP INTO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

YOUR BUSINESS CAN HELP SUPPORT UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE THROUGH WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

Raising aspirations, supporting skills development, and enabling everyone to engage fully in society and to prosper to the best of their abilities

We can support you to facilitate work placements for:

- Young people aged 18 – 24 under the **Young Persons Employment initiative**, offering young jobseekers the opportunity to undertake real work and adjust to the routines and habits of working life, significantly improving employment prospects
- People aged 25 – 59 under the **Step into Employment programme**, offering work experience to a wider age group that helps participants develop or re-fresh skills and build confidence.

Your business can support unemployed people and the economically inactive to find work by hosting work experience placements, facilitated by Business in the Community Northern Ireland in partnership with Bryson FutureSkills.

Why offer work placements?

Employers that host work placements have the opportunity to raise the aspirations of people who are unemployed, by giving them practical and relevant insights into the world of work.

Extended periods of unemployment for an individual can affect future employment prospects and are closely associated to ill-health and poverty.

How does it work?

Businesses typically hosted a client for a maximum of 10 weeks and

committed to offering up to 30 hours work experience per week, but this was when the placements were “live”.



A virtual work experience placement is likely to be considerably less and the duration and content can be discussed and agreed to suit your business needs and aims of the work experience, see the checklist in the toolkit.

BITC/Bryson will recruit the right participant(s), support with insurance, liaise about schedules and provide ongoing mentoring support to the participant for the duration of the placement.

Both initiatives are aimed at unemployed and economically inactive people living in the Greater Belfast and Newtownabbey areas and offer the following benefits to the participants:

- 10-week employability programme with Bryson FutureSkills
- One-to-one mentoring support
- Accredited employability qualification
- Personal Development sessions
- Receipt of benefits will not be affected

APPENDIX 4 – AGE AT WORK



To support people aged 50+, the Age at Work project provides a one-stop shop for older people seeking advice and guidance on employment, career change and retraining.

Business in the Community Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have partnered with Age NI, Age Scotland and Age Cymru to deliver the Age at Work programme across all three nations. Together we are supporting employers to respond effectively to the ageing population and the needs of older workers, and to leverage the benefits of effective intergenerational working.

The Age at Work programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, aims to:

- Encourage and support businesses to be more age-inclusive in retaining, retraining and recruiting older workers
- Raise awareness of the impact of an ageing workforce and the need for an age-inclusive agenda in government, business and wider society
- Support older workers to remain in or return to work

Mid-Career Review

The Mid Career Review service offers a range of one-to-one and group support, to suit your individual needs. Through tailored Mid-Career

Reviews, the Age at Work project will help people aged 50+ plan for later life by providing information in relation to:

- Financial Planning (Retirement planning, pensions, savings, debt, legal issues)
- Career Planning (Skills, employability tips, rights)
- Health and Wellbeing (Health conditions, sedentary lifestyle, staying sharp, positive physical and mental health)
- Work-life balance

Still Ready for Work

Virtual placement/ work experience. Virtual workshops, topics include:

- CV
- Job Search & Applications
- Interviews
- Digital Skills & Social Media

E-Learning, topics include:

- Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace
- Fatigue
- Suicide Awareness
- Menopause
- Musculoskeletal Health
- Managing Stress
- Building Resilience

RESOURCES

A range of resources that are available for organisations to refer to in developing their work experience programme:

Business in the Community Resources

- [The Work Inspiration website](#)
- [Young People and Schools part of the website](#)
- [Inclusive Employment part of the website](#)
- [#WorkItOut part of the website](#)
- [Age at Work part of the website](#)

Government Websites

- [NI Direct has a section on Work Experience](#)
- NI Direct has a section on [Careers](#) and also a section for [adults](#)

- NI Business Info has a section on [Work Experience](#)
- Education Authority Work Experience [Arrangements](#) and downloadable [guidance](#)

Child Protection Information

- [NSPCC website](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive website](#)
- [Education Authority work experience guidelines](#) in relation to safeguarding/child protection (page 10 and page 30)

Useful Content

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework shows how to build essential skills at every stage of life – explore the resources](#)

ENJOYED THIS CONTENT?

You might also like:

- To find out more about our Employability work
- To find out more about our Advisory Services
- Join us at one of our upcoming Events



Talk to one of our expert team today to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further, and drive lasting global change.