



Norfolk County Council



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Factsheet 4

Sourcing Placements



4. Sourcing Placements

Norfolk and Suffolk Careers Hub on HelpYouChoose have their own dedicated pages on HelpYouChoose, which include lots of information and resources for careers staff in schools: [Norfolk & Suffolk Careers Hub](#)

[9 Tips on Sourcing Work Experience for Your Students | Springpod Blog](#)

Third-party work experience providers can also source placements and complete checks.

Self-sourcing placements:

- Is encouraged for most learners, especially where students are ready to approach employers independently
- Staff should identify students who might require more structured help
- Direct approaches to businesses encourage independence and confidence
- Encourage students to use family or friend networks for contacts, advice and potential introductions
- Websites and matching platforms can help students find suitable employers
- Guidance is available online, including:
 - Youth Employment UK: [How to Arrange Your Own Work Experience Placement](#)

How schools can support:

- Start planning early - at least six months in advance
- Help students identify their likes, dislikes and skills they need to develop further
- Encourage students to research their existing career ideas and look beyond
- Encourage students to talk to a careers guidance adviser if they are struggling for ideas or choices
- Allow students enough time to research, contact employers, and secure placements - timely preparation helps ensure better quality and suitability of placements
- Schools should check that potential opportunities offered are realistic, suitable and safe
- Encourage students to think about the location of potential employers and the transport methods they will need to rely on to get there
- Maintain an internal database of employers who you engage with, both past and present, for all employer engagement activities – not just work experience
- Ask parents/carers and school governors if they/their employer can offer a placement

- Host business breakfasts or employer networking events to build relationships and facilitate student/employer interactions prior to work experience week, to help build confidence
- Use free placement providers (e.g., Barclays LifeSkills) where relevant
- As well as in-person placements, help students research virtual national work experience programmes with employers such as Airbus, BBC, the NHS - via partner organisations such as Springpod:
 - [Gain Virtual Work Experience. Earn certificates - 100% free! | Springpod](#)
- Encourage applications to longer-term structured programmes like those offered by the NHS
- Encourage stretching, high-quality placements
 - Students sometimes choose placements that are easy or familiar (e.g. with a family member) rather than stretching
 - Under-challenging placements can result in missed opportunities for both student and employer
 - Students should be encouraged to seek placements that extend their skills and confidence
 - Schools may need to support students who have limited personal networks
 - Staff can guide students on how to contact employers directly and professionally

SEND-specific support

Students with additional needs may require extra support, and the right employer match can make the experience more positive and successful. Extra support may include:

- Multiple pre-placement visits for the student to meet the employer and to familiarise themselves with the environment
- Extra communication between school and employer both prior to and throughout the placement
- Considering whether there is a quiet space for students to go if they feel anxious and need to step away
- If appropriate, ensuring the employer is able to assign a dedicated member of staff to be the student's mentor throughout the placement
- A support worker to accompany the student on placement
- Ensuring any medical needs or access requirements can be safely met

Out of county placements

- If you're using a third party to broker work experience, check the reach of the organisation in terms of health and safety checking

Common challenges

Some sectors are harder to secure placements in due to specific barriers – for example:

- Health & safety concerns make placements difficult in:
 - Manufacturing
 - Construction
 - Any sector where employer insurance doesn't cover under-16s
- Safeguarding and confidentiality issues can limit placements in:
 - Healthcare environments
 - Alternative options include: NHS work experience programmes, day nurseries, care homes
- Capacity issues in creative and media industries:
 - Many businesses are small (SMEs) and unable to host students
 - Many staff in these industries now work from home
 - Alternative work-related experiences may be required
- Business size challenges:
 - Larger companies: difficult to identify the right contact person; high competition for places
 - Smaller companies: may struggle with required paperwork (risk assessments, H&S checks)
- Location limitations:
 - Some sectors (e.g. engineering) are less available in cities
 - Transport barriers (and potentially costs) may prevent students reaching certain placements, especially in rural areas of the county
- Student-related factors:
 - High-level career interests (e.g. medicine, law) may offer few suitable placements and students may only be able to access lower-level roles in those sectors
 - Lack of maturity can make meeting employer expectations difficult



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