

# ***Providing Work Placements for Disabled Students***

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A good practice guide for further and higher  
education institutions

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Work placements offer students an opportunity for vocational learning and personal development. For students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties this opportunity can be a key to the world of work from which they might otherwise be excluded. Work placements are increasingly becoming integrated into courses and the awarding bodies for most vocational courses require a work placement as part of the programme. It is important to ensure that disabled students, irrespective of age, ethnicity and gender, have the same access to work placements as other students. For disabled students to benefit fully from their courses, work placements need to be fully accessible to them.
- 1.2 Changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) introduced by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, mean that institutions must take action to ensure disabled students have the same opportunities as others to benefit from work placements. The challenge is great. Suitable placement provision is often in limited supply and disabled students can face considerable additional barriers because employers may be unwilling to accept or support them.

## **What are work placements?**

- 1.3 The term work placement is used throughout this document to mean a planned period of work-based learning or experience, where the learning outcomes are part of a course or programme of study. This is usually provided outside the institution at which the student is enrolled. Work placements may be part of a sandwich course, a short placement, a work taster, temporary work or a period of supported employment as part of vocational training. Placements may also take place abroad. Students may arrange their own placement, or they may be set up by the institution or a third party. In all cases the duties on the institution are the same.
- 1.4 This guidance does not cover work or learning that is not part of a programme of study, such as part-time, term-time and vacation work that students arrange for themselves.

## **Status and purpose of the document**

- 1.5 This document provides a guide to institutions' duties in regard to work placements and offers practical advice on what institutions can do to ensure quality work placement opportunities for disabled students. It is aimed at institution staff responsible for placements: placement organisers, subject tutors and disability officers/learning support coordinators. It is not aimed at employers or students themselves.

- 1.6 In writing this document, Skill consulted the Association of Colleges, the Learning and Skills Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council, National Council for Education and Training for Wales, Universities UK, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, The Standing Conference of College Principals, The Higher Education Funding Council for England, MENCAP and Workable.
- 1.7 This document has no contractual or legal status.

## 2 Background and context

### **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

- 2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, makes it unlawful for education institutions to discriminate against disabled students and other disabled people. One of the areas in which it is unlawful to discriminate is in the provision and arrangement of work placements.

### **Who has rights under the post-16 sections of the Act?**

- 2.2 The Act applies to people who are disabled according to the definition of disability included in the DDA. A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has an effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be substantial, adverse and long term.
- 2.3 In this respect, physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments, mental illness or mental health problems, learning disabilities, dyslexia and conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy. People with severe disfigurements are also covered by the Act. People who have had a disability in the past continue to be covered even if they no longer have the disability. People who have had a disability in the past, which meets the Act's definition, continue to be covered even if they no longer have the disability.

### **Who has responsibilities under the post-16 sections of the Act?**

- 2.4 The post-16 sections of the Act place responsibilities on education institutions not to discriminate against disabled students in the provision of 'student services'. Work placements come within the definition of student services.
- 2.5 The legal responsibility for ensuring discrimination does not take place rests with the institution. Institutions may delegate the function of organising placements but they cannot delegate their legal responsibilities. In some cases students may have a contract of employment during the placement (this will apply particularly to students on sandwich courses). In these cases their employers will also have legal responsibilities towards them under the employment sections of the DDA. However, an institution's responsibility is not diminished by this, and the college or university must continue to ensure that discrimination does not take place.

### **What is discrimination?**

- 2.6 According to the Act, discrimination can occur in either of two ways:
- When a responsible body treats a disabled person **less favourably**, for a reason relating to the person's disability, than it treats (or would treat) a person to whom that reason does not or would not apply, if that treatment cannot be **justified**.

- When a responsible body fails to make a **reasonable adjustment** when a disabled student is placed, or likely to be placed, at a **substantial disadvantage**.

### **What the DDA requires you to do**

- 2.7 The Act says that education institutions must take reasonable steps to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

A profoundly deaf student who uses British Sign Language is on a Sports Instructor course. She asks for an interpreter to accompany her on a one-day first aid course before going on placement to a sports centre. The placement is an essential requirement of the course and the student would be at a substantial disadvantage if the adjustment were not made.

### **Determining what is reasonable**

- 2.8 What adjustments are reasonable for an institution to take will depend on individual circumstances, for example, the type of work placement being provided, the nature and length of the placement and the importance of the placement to the course or to the particular student's learning. The implications of a student's disability are also relevant. Some of the other factors to be taken into account in determining what is reasonable are:
- the financial resources available to the institution
  - the cost and practicality of making a particular adjustment
  - grants or loans likely to be available to disabled students such as the Disabled Students' Allowances
  - the extent to which aids or services will otherwise be provided to disabled students
  - health and safety considerations
  - the need to maintain academic and other prescribed standards
  - the relevant interests of other students or people.

### **If things go wrong**

- 2.9 If a student believes that he or she has been discriminated against, he or she can seek legal redress through the courts against the institution. The Disability Rights Commission is setting up a conciliation service, and if both parties agree, this may provide an alternative route for resolution. If a student has a legal contract with the employer, he or she may also be able to pursue legal action against the work placement provider through an Employment Tribunal.

### **More information on the DDA**

- 2.10 For more information on the responsibilities of institutions under the DDA, see the Code of Practice on the post-16 education provisions published by the Disability Rights Commission (See Chapter 9: Sources of information and advice)

## **Sources of funding to support disabled students on placement**

- 2.11 **Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)** are available to disabled students on full-time or part-time undergraduate higher education courses throughout the United Kingdom, and also to full-time or part-time postgraduates from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Postgraduate disabled students in Scotland should check their eligibility with the Student Awards Agency Scotland, where only some courses carry eligibility. Currently, postgraduate students on eligible courses must be full time to qualify for DSA.
- 2.12 **Learning and Skills Council and National Council for Education and Training for Wales** have a legal duty to have regard to the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a duty to promote equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people. They make funding for support available in all components of learning programmes, whether further education or training, and wherever they take place. This should include funding for students on work placement.
- 2.13 **Access to Work** funding may be available to disabled students who are employed during their work placements. The Employment Service (Jobcentre), through the Disability Employment Adviser, can make a grant towards the additional costs in starting a job that arise because of an individual's disability.
- 2.14 **Institutional resources** may also need to be used to fund adjustments. Under the legislation, institutions are responsible for making adjustments where reasonable, and where other funding is not available institutions will need to use their own resources.

### 3 Setting up a framework of good practice

#### **Institutional policies and procedures**

- 3.1 Institutions need to review their policies and procedures for disabled students and for work placements, in the light of the legislation. However they should not aim at a minimum legal compliance, but consider where current policies and practices could be improved to offer equal opportunities in work placements to disabled students.

As part of its procedures a university provides disability awareness training for all staff involved in placement development and supervision and ensures that placement providers are made aware of disability issues.

#### **Course planning**

- 3.2 Where a work placement is an integral part of the course, the institution should consider the needs of disabled students at the course planning and approval stage. Under the DDA, institutions have a responsibility to anticipate the needs of disabled students and make adjustments in advance where these are reasonable. Anticipating students' needs may also reduce the requirement for making expensive adjustments for individual students at a later date.
- 3.3 All aspects of the placement should be considered. For example, in some cases the learning objectives of the placement may need to be adjusted, perhaps giving a higher focus to employability skills for a student with no previous work experience. Work-based assessment and accreditation processes should also ensure equal opportunity for progression by disabled students.
- 3.4 It may be helpful to reflect these considerations in programme specifications and information for course applicants, so that students know placements will be made accessible to them.

A university includes a reference to opportunities for disabled students to participate fully in placement activities in course advertising. Disabled students who have undertaken and succeeded in work placements are profiled in the course information.

#### **Placement approval**

- 3.5 Student work placements involve a range of relationships, rights and responsibilities, some legal and others negotiable between the student, institution and placement provider. The institution's relationship with the placement provider is often informal. However the institution has a legal responsibility towards the student to ensure that discrimination does not take place and reasonable adjustments are made during the work placement.

3.6 To ensure that they can deliver their responsibilities towards students, institutions should have procedures for ensuring the quality and accessibility of placements before they are approved. These should include arrangements to ensure disabled students will be appropriately supported. It may be helpful to have a written agreement with the placement provider, which outlines the responsibilities of the placement provider, the institution and students. Such an agreement might cover:

- physical access to the workplace
- responsibility for assessing the individual needs of disabled students
- who will pay (the institution or the placement provider) for any adjustments that need to be made for disabled students
- responsibilities for health and safety in the workplace
- procedures for risk assessment of activities associated with the work placement
- procedures for responding to any difficulties, including complaints and health emergencies
- procedures for providing feedback to the institution and the disabled student on the student's progress.

3.7 Institutions should also advise placement providers of their expectation that disclosure of disability should not lead to discrimination in the workplace.

### **Physical access**

3.8 In some cases institutions may want to carry out an access audit of a provider's premises so that they are fully aware of the appropriateness of the employer for possible future placements. Such an audit might be undertaken by an access consultant, or less formally, by the placement organiser or disability staff from the institution. Institution staff may be able to persuade employers to carry out or fund the audit themselves in response to their own responsibilities under the DDA. Such an audit might cover:

- building layout, including approaches, entry points, lifts, toilets, work stations, reception areas, parking facilities, internal corridors, staircases, public areas (including canteens) and rest areas
- fixtures and fittings, including handles, taps, signage, power sources, lighting, counters
- furniture, including desks, chairs, filing cabinets
- equipment, including computer hardware and software, communication aids
- other facilities, including access to public transport and amenities
- noise levels
- emergency egress procedures.

### **Monitoring procedures**

- 3.9 Institutions should monitor and review the effectiveness of their procedures for securing effective work placements for disabled students. Monitoring may identify any particular issues faced by disabled students such as restricted choice or poorer quality work placements. It may also identify disadvantage for such students in relation to ethnicity and/or gender.

### **Complaints, harassment and discrimination procedures**

- 3.10 Complaints procedures should make clear who students can contact if problems arise. However, complaints processes can be slow, and so it is important that placement organisers are also able to respond quickly and appropriately to solve problems so that students' learning experiences are not interrupted.
- 3.11 It may be necessary to have procedures for terminating unsatisfactory work placements where difficulties cannot be resolved. In such cases students will need to be transferred to more suitable placements so that their learning is not compromised.

### **Checklist for work placement procedures**

- Have you reviewed procedures in relation to the legislation and with a view to developing good practice in work placement management?
- Do your course development and placement approval mechanisms take into account the needs of disabled students?
- Do you positively promote work placements to disabled students?
- Do you have written agreements covering the respective responsibilities of the institution, students and placement providers?
- Have you allocated resources to meet the needs of disabled students on placements?
- Have you undertaken an access audit of work placement providers' premises?
- Have you considered offering appropriate disability awareness or equality training to staff in the placement organisation?
- Are work placements monitored in regard to opportunities for disabled students?

## 4 Finding placements and preparation

4.1 To be successful, work placements should meet the individual needs of students, the course requirements and make full use of the opportunities afforded by the placements. To ensure that all these factors are working in harmony for individual disabled students, placement organisers in institutions may need to work closely with students, placement providers and course leaders. Often, extra time spent during the preparation period may be all that is required to ensure that a disabled student's work placement fully achieves its aims.

### Identifying students' placement requirements

4.2 Placement organisers should discuss with each student his or her particular placement requirements. It may be relevant to cover the following issues:

- the requirements of the course and learning outcomes sought
- the student's skills and capabilities
- the student's preferences – the kind of work the student is interested in
- the location of the placement and any travel problems that may be presented
- the student's expectations – some students may have unrealistic expectations or expectations may be too low
- work demands and pressures – work placements can be daunting or extremely stressful for students with little or no prior work experience or for those who have low confidence
- any adjustments the student may need while on the placement (see Chapter 5: Making adjustments, for more on this)
- any health and safety considerations
- any concerns minority ethnic students may have in relation to racial discrimination in the work place.

Before arranging work placements for students, a college invites all students to express their preferences, and any particular employer they would be interested in working for. The college approaches employers on an individual basis on students' behalf.

A university counselling service provides support for students with mental health difficulties in areas of self awareness and awareness of work place pressures. Students are encouraged to discuss with their tutor any difficulties they are likely to face without prejudicing their placement opportunity.

A college vocational preparation course for students with learning difficulties organises work placements around each individual student's vocational choice. Work placements aim to give students the opportunity to use their vocational skills in the workplace and to get a realistic impression of working life, including shift work where relevant.

### **Finding an appropriate placement**

- 4.3 Work placements may take longer to set up for disabled students and the matching process may be more complex. The process and responsibility for the finding of work placements varies by institution and course and may take place at different stages of the course.
- 4.4 Placement organisers should consider the widest pool of potential providers and should be wary of making assumptions and stereotyping when arranging work placements for disabled students. All too often, disabled students have unequal access to commercial placement providers and are disproportionately found placements with public sector employers or disability organisations.

A college sent all blind and partially sighted students to a voluntary organisation because the organisation already had equipment available for blind people to use. College staff did not take into account the differing preferences or vocational aspirations of students.

- 4.5 Where students are themselves responsible for aspects of the arrangements, it is helpful to make information on placement opportunities available at an early stage so that students can make their choice of placement and begin preparations. Students may also need extra support in approaching employers, making appropriate applications, disclosure of a disability, interview coaching and being encouraged to raise concerns in respect of racial discrimination.

Students on a sandwich course are expected by their course tutors to make their own written applications for work placements. A student with dyslexia needs extra support to write his application and his tutor agrees to check the application letters before the student sends them off.

- 4.6 Employers are not under any obligation to take students and placement organisers may need to play a more active role in securing appropriate placements for disabled students. A sample letter is provided in Annex 1, which may be useful in making an initial approach to an employer.
- 4.7 If a student is to go to a placement which has not been used before, the institution should ensure that any formal approval procedures are followed (see 3.5-3.6 above).
- 4.8 In many cases it will be appropriate for the placement organiser to visit the placement to check accessibility and consider any appropriate adjustments for individual students. Any health or disability-based limitations should also be considered.

- 4.9 The placement organiser and the placement provider may need to negotiate who will take responsibility for arranging or funding any necessary adjustments. It is helpful to have a written agreement between the institution, placement provider and student that sets out these responsibilities. A sample agreement which can be used for all students, but which also has a section to outline adjustments for disabled students, is provided in Annex 2.

A physically and visually impaired student on a Social Work Diploma placement was found a placement in her home town, where she had received mobility training, to ensure she had the fullest opportunity to demonstrate her competence.

### **Disclosure of disability**

- 4.10 Students may be reluctant to disclose their disability to placement providers, because they are concerned that they may be discriminated against. Placement organisers may need to offer students the opportunity to talk through the issues that disclosure raises. In some cases, for example, where students are to be employed formally on a work placement, placement organisers may need to explain to students their responsibility to disclose any relevant information on an application form.
- 4.11 In some cases, the implications of a disability may impact upon the work placement, and the institution may therefore be obliged to ensure that information is passed on. Where students will be working with children or other vulnerable people, or with chemicals or dangerous equipment, for example, there will be health and safety and other considerations.

A student with tunnel vision is reluctant to disclose her disability. On her work placement she will be supervising small children in a playground. The placement organiser explains to the student that this information must be passed on to the placement providers because of the risks involved. The student agrees, and a way of discussing this sensitively with the employer is negotiated.

- 4.12 Students also need to be aware that adjustments may sometimes be dependent on their disclosing their disability, or at least their needs, to a placement provider.

A student with Asperger syndrome decides that he will not disclose his disability to the placement provider, even after discussion with the placement organiser and course tutor. There are no health and safety issues, but because the employer and other staff are not aware of his disability, they make no adjustments to the way they work with him. After a while, it is clear that the placement is not working as well as it might. The placement organiser talks with the student, and eventually he agrees to disclose. Adjustments are then made for him, and some of his colleagues in the workplace receive brief awareness training from the institution.

- 4.13 Not all information about a student's disability may be relevant to the work placement. And only certain members of staff at the placement may need to be passed information. Information should only be passed on a need-to-know basis. Some students will prefer to talk to placement providers direct about their needs. Others may prefer the institution to undertake this role.
- 4.14 Students may have gained additional skills as a result of their disability which may be relevant to the work placement. For example, some students may have developed particular skills with technology, or may have had management experience through the employment of personal assistants. It may be helpful if this information, too, is communicated to placement providers.
- 4.15 In discussing with a student whether and what to disclose to a work placement provider, the following issues may be relevant:
- the need to have appropriate information so that adjustments can be made
  - the institution's and the student's responsibilities towards staff and clients/visitors at the placement provider
  - safeguards for ensuring that information will not be used to discriminate against the disabled student
  - safeguards for ensuring confidentiality of information and details on who will have access to the information
  - who will make the disclosure – whether this will be undertaken by the institution or by the student.

A student with epilepsy is supported in disclosing his disability to a placement provider. This allows adjustments to be made to work patterns and exposure to computer screens.

### **Guidance and information**

- 4.16 Appropriate guidance and information may be crucial in helping students prepare for a work placement. This should be in appropriate formats and might cover:
- appropriate induction to the placement environment (the sample induction checklist at Annex 3 might be useful for all students, and includes a section of particular relevance to disabled students)
  - work expectations and any learning plans
  - the staff and technical support within the institution that will remain available to the student during the placement
  - names and contact details for the designated staff in the institution
  - a named contact to receive the student on the placement (the student should have met their placement contact before starting)
  - details on who to contact with any problems, including at least one person at the placement and one person within the institution
  - health and safety issues on work placement.

A university stores its work placement information electronically to ensure it can readily be converted into large print or alternative formats.

4.17 Placement providers too may need information and guidance on how best to support individual students. In some cases staff and supervisors in the workplace may need training. Training might be provided or paid for by the institution or by the employer.

A college placement organiser visits the office where a visual impaired student is to be placed and gives staff a short briefing on easy ways to adapt their working practices so that they are accessible to him.

A university suggests to an employer that staff receive deaf awareness training before the arrival of a deaf student on a work placement. The employer also organises for all staff to learn some basic sign language and fingerspelling.

A university provides short written guidance to an employer on the needs of a student with mental health difficulties.

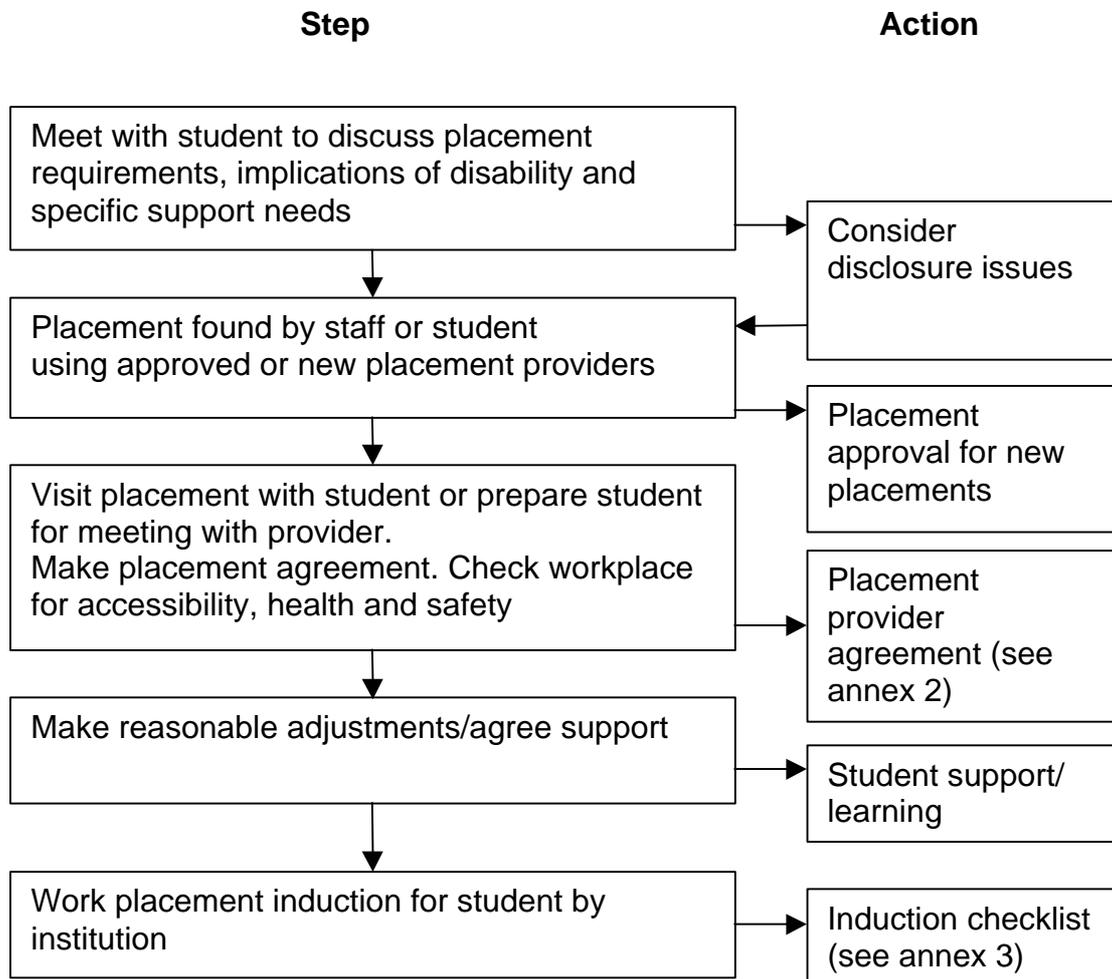
A colleges sends letters, detailing adjustments for each student, with the student's permission, to placement providers on a need-to-know basis.

### **Checklist for finding placements and preparation**

- Do students have the opportunity to choose their work placements where possible?
- Do students have the opportunity to discuss their needs and preferences with placement organisers in advance?
- Have students had the opportunity to discuss their concerns about disclosure of disability?
- Are placements suited to individuals and do they allow learning at a suitable pace for them?
- Are placement providers aware of relevant student needs?
- Are all parties clear who is responsible for making and funding adjustments?
- Have students had appropriate briefing and guidance in advance of placements?
- Are students clear who they should contact if problems arise?

## Placement preparation procedure

The following flow chart may be useful in coordinating placement matching.



## 5 Making adjustments

5.1 Staff within the institution should meet with students at an early stage to discuss their support needs and what, if any, adjustments may need to be made. In many cases students may have a good idea of the types of support they need. Other students may not be aware of what equipment or support is available and might be useful in the unfamiliar work environment. Aspects which it might be relevant to cover in a discussion include:

- ensuring students are appropriately prepared for placements – in some cases disabled students may need more preparation than other students (see 4.16 above)
- ensuring access to work placements, including transport arrangements
- ensuring access to any equipment that the student may need to use on the work placement
- ensuring access to audio material and meetings for students with sensory impairments, including the use of interpreters, radio aids or subtitled videos
- ensuring access to visual material and documents for students with visual impairments or dyslexia, including providing printed materials in accessible formats or providing material on tape
- ensuring access to complex instructions for students with learning difficulties
- ensuring placements are appropriate for students with mental health problems or who experience fatigue etc. In some cases a balance may need to be struck between allowing students access to the widest range of placement opportunity and consideration of the demands involved
- clarifying arrangements for support workers who may accompany students, eg sign language interpreters, personal assistants etc
- ensuring ongoing support for those students who may need it through visits or telephone calls, particularly at the start of the placement.

An institution routinely sends students to a work placement in a warehouse locally where forklift trucks and other heavy machinery are used. The institution and the supervisors at the warehouse work closely with a deaf student before he starts his placement to ensure that he is aware of the risks around the warehouse. Supervisors and other staff at the warehouse receive training from the institution in working with deaf people.

A college work placement officer acts as a link person between employers and students. The staff member organises role-play for students with learning difficulties to prepare them for the work environment before the placement begins. Role-play also helps students learn how to ask for help if difficulties arise in the workplace.

A college in a rural area arranges travel training for students with learning difficulties before they start their work placements. Other students at the college provide this on a voluntary basis.

A college organises a support worker to assist a student during the first few days of her placement. The support worker performs a range of tasks including accompanying the student on the bus on her first day.

A student with cerebral palsy uses an adapted keyboard at the university computer centre. It is too cumbersome for him to transport to and from the work placement on days when he will be there. The university provides him with a similar keyboard to use with the computer at the office where he will be on work placement.

5.2 As explained above (4.9), it is important to clarify who will make each adjustment and who will pay for them. It will also be helpful for the student to have a formal written record of what support has been agreed. The sample placement agreement at Annex 2 could be used for this purpose.

A college arranges for workplace assessments for students with learning disabilities to be undertaken by postgraduate psychology students under supervision. Students receive a work placement needs assessment to share with the work placement provider which outlines recommended strategies and adjustments.

A university produces learning agreements for all disabled students outlining their needs, including those arising on placements.

A university social work placement tutor works closely with the central university disability support service and with placement providers. Students who declare a disability are invited to visit once they have been accepted onto the course to discuss how their particular needs can be met, both during the taught components of the course and while on placement. Students write their own guidance for placement providers stating their likely needs, and students and the learning advisor meet with placement providers to draw up a learning agreement, covering the strategies which the different parties will use to meet these needs.

### **Additional specialist support**

5.3 Some students will need support workers to accompany them on work placements. It may be that the institution will be able to provide designated members of staff with appropriate skills and experience. In other cases, institutions may need to call on external expertise.

A university maintains a list of local British Sign Language interpreters on whom they can call to support deaf students on work placements.

### **Adaptations to the placement**

- 5.4 In many cases the most important adjustment will be to some aspect of the placement itself. Some students may need to start the day later than other staff in the workplace, or placement providers may need to reallocate tasks within a team. Some students may need additional support from supervisors. In other cases the location of aspects of the work may need to be altered to provide full access to opportunities for the student.

A student with learning difficulties and a physical difficulty undertakes a work placement in an office setting. She finds it difficult to do filing because she does not have sufficient manual dexterity. The placement provider reallocates the tasks in the office, so that she learns how to use office equipment such as the franking machine instead.

A student with renal failure needs to undertake dialysis during the day. The placement provider arranges for a room to be set aside for him, and ensures that he can take breaks at appropriate times to do this.

A blind student needs to bring his guide dog with him to his work placement. The placement provider arranges for a small patch of grass to the side of the building to be set aside for the dog to exercise, and a staff member shows this to the student on his first day.

A student with learning difficulties has a placement working on the reception desk of a small office. The placement provider arranges for one of the administrative staff to act as a mentor to the student, and to take particular responsibility for her during lunch breaks in case she is left out.

A student with ME on a hair and beauty course at a college undertakes a placement at a hairdresser's. Work placements are usually arranged on the basis of a full working day. Because this is too tiring for the student, the college arranges with the placement provider for the student to attend in the mornings only.

### **Dilemmas**

- 5.5 While students need to be able to access placements, adjustments should not go to the extent of compromising their learning outcomes. It will be a matter of judgement for the placement organiser, in consultation with the student and placement provider, to balance a realistic level of support with the demands of the placement.
- 5.6 In some cases the cost of a particular adjustment may be prohibitive. However, there is often more than one solution to any access difficulty, and other options should be explored before a particular placement is abandoned altogether.

A student with a mobility difficulty is due to start a work placement in a building with only partial lift access. After discussions with the college, the placement provider arranges for team meetings in which the student will be involved to be relocated to a floor with lift access.

### **Remaining flexible**

5.7 It may not always be possible to identify in advance every adjustment that needs to be made. In many cases it will be necessary to adapt support arrangements as the placement progresses, as students become more confident in their roles, or as new needs arise. Placement organisers need to keep in touch with students on placements and with placement providers to ensure that support arrangements are adjusted accordingly.

### **Checklist for workplace adjustments**

- Is the placement physically accessible for those with sensory and mobility impairments?
- Where physical access is not possible, have arrangements been made to relocate important meetings, etc?
- Do students have access to suitable methods of transport if required?
- Will communication in the workplace be accessible to those with sensory impairments?
- When a student is unable to attend regularly, have alternative arrangements been made to enable the student to continue with his/her placement?
- Is there a clear written agreement between the institution, placement provider and student about what adjustments are required, and who will provide them?
- Does the placement organiser keep in constant touch with students and placement providers to ensure that adjustments are providing access to work placements?

## 6 Monitoring and review

- 6.1 Placement staff need to monitor placements to ensure they are working well for disabled students. In particular staff need to monitor the adjustments made for students to ensure they are responsive to their current needs.

Students on a social work course have a learning agreement which covers their placement. This is reviewed formally during the placement and evaluated by the student and the learning advisor from the university.

- 6.2 Any complaints of harassment and/or discrimination on a work placement should be investigated promptly and brought to the attention of the placement provider. The aim should always be to resolve complaints speedily and minimise disruption to the placement. The institution may in some cases need to terminate the placement if the provider fails to ensure that the student will not face further harassment or discrimination. In such cases alternative arrangements need to be put in place to allow the student to gain appropriate work experience elsewhere.
- 6.3 At the end of a placement students should be given the opportunity to review their progression in terms of learning and any other personal development. Considering their experience from the point of view of the 'employability skills' they have developed will support students in making career choices and applying for jobs.
- 6.4 Institutions report that students returning from placement, no matter how positive the experience, can find that they lack motivation on their return to study. Some students may need particular support in making the transition back to academic work.

The student support service offers students a debriefing session on return to the university to discuss their placement experience within a context of personal development.

## **7 Evaluation and development of new placement opportunities for disabled students**

- 7.1 Existing placements need to be evaluated to ensure that they are providing appropriate standards and learning opportunities to disabled students. Such evaluation might be undertaken in a variety of ways, but might include collecting feedback from students, placement organisers, placement providers and academic staff.
- 7.2 Where appropriate, placement organisers should give feedback to placement providers to improve and develop their provision for disabled students. Where experiences have been positive, this may provide encouragement to providers to consider accepting other disabled students in future. Where experiences have been negative, placement organisers need to determine what has gone wrong and, where necessary, approach providers to see how inappropriate attitudes or practices might be changed.
- 7.3 Lessons learned from the evaluation of existing placements should be fed into the strategic planning of future work placements, and the processes and procedures for setting up and approving placements.
- 7.4 Disabled students' achievements and the positive experiences of both students and placement providers could be used in marketing and guidance to provide encouragement to other employers considering offering placements to disabled students.
- 7.5 One of the best ways of ensuring that the standard of placement learning is not only maintained but continually improved is to develop a partnership approach to working with employers. This may be particularly appropriate where an institution works regularly with an employer. If employers are involved in the planning processes they are more likely to become involved in taking on disabled students, and more likely to respond well when particular adjustments are called for.

A university hosts employer network meetings to develop work placements for disabled students. Students present their own experiences and describe the benefits in their own terms. The university encourages employers to get involved in placement provision for disabled students by providing examples of successful subsequent graduate careers.

## 8 Frequently asked questions

**Q When do you advise the student/placement organiser to disclose disability?**

A Students should have the opportunity to disclose disability (if not already known) to placement organisers at the planning stage and to discuss the implications of their disability for any work placement.

Whether and how much information needs to be shared with the placement provider, supervisor or other work colleagues should be considered with the student in relation to the particular placement location, working environment and tasks to be undertaken. Institutions can help encourage students to disclose by securing agreements from placement providers regarding their role in supporting disabled students in advance.

**Q Where does confidentiality end and disclosure start?**

A In most cases the need for disclosure will be agreed between the student and placement organiser. If the student does not wish to disclose their disability to the placement provider in circumstances where the students' disability may put themselves or others at risk, the student's preference for confidentiality may need to be overridden. In a few cases there may be legal implications if an institution is aware of a student's disability and chooses not to disclose this to the placement provider.

**Q Who is responsible for funding adjustments on work placements?**

A The duty for making reasonable adjustment under the DDA falls on the institution. In some cases alternative funding sources may be available, or the placement provider may be persuaded to fully fund, or contribute towards, the costs of adjustments. This will not be possible in every case, however, and institutions will need to ensure that they have set aside sufficient budget to meet the reasonable needs of disabled students on placements.

Where students are under a contract of employment with the placement provider (for example on a sandwich course), the employer may also have a responsibility to make adjustments. The fact that the employer has a responsibility does not diminish the institution's responsibility.

**Q Are placements controlled by external professional bodies covered by the Act?**

A All placements are covered by the DDA. However, certain professional vocational courses, such as medicine, nursing and teaching, have particular accreditation requirements which are controlled by external bodies, not by the institution. The completion of the award may be dependent on certain tasks being undertaken on placements. Where this

is the case, institutions are not expected to make adjustments that might prevent the work placement component of the course being accredited. Ideally, these issues should be discussed with students at the admissions stage so that any necessary alternative ways of assessing courses can be explored.

**Q How far should adjustments go?**

A The DDA does not require institutions to make adjustments that would compromise the maintenance of academic or other standards appropriate to the course or learning programme.

## 9 Sources of information and advice

### 9.1 Useful publications

***The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001***

***The Disability Discrimination Act 1995***

***Inclusive Learning*** - Report of the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee. The Further Education Funding Council

Available from The Stationery Office:

Telephone orders/general enquiries	0870 600 5522
Fax orders	0870 600 5533
Email	bookorders@theso.co.uk
Website	www.clicktso.com

Legislation is also available on the Internet: [www.hmsso.gov.uk](http://www.hmsso.gov.uk)

### ***Code of Practice Post-16 Education and Related Services***

Available from the Disability Rights Commission:

Telephone	08457 622 633
Textphone	08457 622 644
Faxback service	08457 622 611

Also available on the Internet from: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

Disability Rights Commission documents are available in English and Welsh and in alternative formats.

### ***Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Placement learning***

### ***Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Students with disabilities***

Published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Available from:

Linney Direct  
Adamsway  
Mansfield  
Nottinghamshire  
NG18 4FN

Telephone	01623 450788
Fax	01623 450629

Also available on the Internet from: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

**CVCP/UCEA Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of Higher Education Students**

Available from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association:  
Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London  
WC1H 9HU

Telephone           020-7383-2444  
Fax                   020-7383-2666  
Website             www.ucea.ac.uk

**A Code of Practice for the Operation of the Placement Element of Sandwich Courses in Higher Education** - for those involved in preparation for and the implementation of sandwich courses in higher education

Available from ASET (Association for Sandwich Education and Training)  
3 Westbrook Court  
Sharrow Vale Road  
Sheffield  
S11 8YZ

Tel: 0114 221 2902  
Fax: 0114 221 2903  
Email: aaset@aset.demon.co.uk

**Student Pack** - designed to facilitate the development of students' skills through reflective learning. The pack contains a CD Skills Tracker which allows practical recording of the development of key transferable skills.

**Tutors Work Experience Resource Pack** - training materials for academic staff preparing students for work experience.

**Placement Tutor's Handbook** –containing sections on health and safety, the objectives and benefits of placements, interdisciplinary issues, an outline of placement activities, a code of good practice and a glossary of terminology.

**Company Guide** - a guide for companies on employing undergraduate students on temporary, part-time and full-time work experience.

Available from The National Centre For Work Experience:  
Prospects House  
Booth Street  
Manchester M139EP  
Telephone           0161 277 5200  
Email                 ncwe@ncwe.com

**Base-level provision for disabled students** (HEFCE 99/04)

**Resource Directory: Products and services from HEFCE-funded disability projects** (HEFCE 98/60)

Published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England  
Available from:  
HEFCE Publications  
Northavon House  
Coldharbour Lane  
Bristol BS16 1QD  
Telephone 0117 931 7035  
Answerphone 0117 931 7438  
Fax 0117 931 7463

Also available on the Internet: [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

**The Co-ordinator's Handbook** A guide to making provision for disabled students in higher education institutions

Available from Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities  
Chapter House  
18-20 Crucifix Lane  
London  
SE1 3JW

Telephone (voice/text) 020 7450 0620  
Fax 020 7450 0650  
Email [admin@skill.org.uk](mailto:admin@skill.org.uk)  
Website [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

**Adults with learning difficulties**

**All things being equal: a practical guide to widening participation for adults with learning difficulties in continuing education**

**Images of possibility: creating learning opportunities for adults with mental health difficulties**

**Our right to learn: a pack for people with learning difficulties and staff who work with them.**

**Towards Inclusion: Developing integrated education for adults with learning difficulties**

Available from NIACE:  
21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester  
LE1 7GE  
Website [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

## 9.2 Useful organisations

### **Basic Skills Agency**

Commonwealth House  
19 New Oxford St.  
London  
WC1A 1NU

Telephone 020 7405 4017  
Website [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

### **The Centre for Accessible Environments**

Holds a register of physical access auditors and can give general advice on physical access.

Nutmeg House  
60 Gainsford Street  
London  
SE1 2NY

Telephone 020 7357 8182

### **Disability Rights Commission Helpline**

Offers free advice on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Freepost MID02164  
Stratford-upon-Avon  
CV37 9BR

Telephone 08457 622 633  
Textphone 08457 622 644  
Faxback 08457 622 611

### **The Employers' Forum on Disability**

A national employers' organisation concerned with promoting the employment of people with disabilities.

Nutmeg House  
60 Gainsford Street  
London  
SE1 2NY

Telephone 020 7403 3020.  
Email [efd@employers-forum.co.uk](mailto:efd@employers-forum.co.uk)  
Website [www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)

### **The National Centre for Work Experience**

An organisation which promotes and supports quality work experience.

Prospects House  
Booth Street  
Manchester M139EP

Telephone 0161 277 5200  
Email [ncwe@ncwe.com](mailto:ncwe@ncwe.com)

### **Royal National Institute for the Blind Education and Employment Network**

Provides advice and support

Helpline telephone 08457 766 9999  
Email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)  
Website [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

### **Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities**

A national independent organisation promoting opportunities for disabled students over the age of 16.

Chapter House  
18-20 Crucifix Lane  
London  
SE1 3JW

Information Service open 1.30-4.30 weekdays  
Telephone (voice) 0800 328 5050  
Telephone (text) 0800 068 2422  
Fax 020 7450 0650

Email [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk)  
Website [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

### **TechDis**

A national organisation providing information and advice to further and higher education institutions on equipment and technology for disabled students.

Helpdesk [helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk](mailto:helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk)  
Website [www.techdis.ac.uk](http://www.techdis.ac.uk)

## **Workable**

A national charity supporting disabled undergraduates and recent graduates in work experience and training to meet employment goals.

Email                      info@workableuk.org

### **9.3 Local sources of advice**

Local advice should be available from the **Employment Service's Disability Employment Advisers** at local job centres. They manage the Access to Work scheme to support disabled people into work and to help employers to recruit and retrain disabled people.

Website                      [www.employmentservice.gov.uk/](http://www.employmentservice.gov.uk/)

Local disability trainers may be contacted through **Local Authority Disability Advisors**.

## Annex 1: Sample initial letter to employer

Dear

### Student Work Placement

I am writing to you with details of a request for assistance in providing a student with a work placement that will provide experience of working in *[insert type of business, job title or occupation]*. The student in question is *[insert name]* who is in the *[insert number]* year of *[his/her]* course.

I would like to suggest that, in the first instance, it would be a good idea for *[insert name of student]* to pay a short visit to you in order for you to clarify the work *[s/he]* will be doing, and any specific requirements linked to *[his/her]* disability.

With regard to the work placement, I would expect the student to work with *[insert name of placement provider]* from *[insert start date]* for *[insert time period]* and be involved in appropriate work experience. Perhaps, in the first instance, you might negotiate something that is agreeable to both you and *[insert name of student]*.

In anticipation, it is very kind of you to consider helping us with our work placement programme, given your busy work schedule.

If you have any queries regarding this letter or with respect to any aspect of the programme, please contact me direct on *[insert telephone number]*.

Yours sincerely

## Annex 2: Sample placement agreement

Name of Student:

Name of Placement Provider/Employer:

The Placement will take place from [*insert date*]: to [*insert date*]:

The hours of work will be:

The placement will be based at [*insert address*]:

Your supervisor will be:

The following adjustments will be made for the duration of your placement:

Adjustment	Provider/funder of adjustment
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- 
- 
- 
- 

The placement organiser will pay a monitoring visit [*insert time period*] by arrangement with the placement supervisor

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Placement Organiser Date

I agree to notify my supervisor if for any reason I am unable to attend my work placement and to inform my placement organiser of any difficulties with the placement or any other problem that adversely affects my work.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Student Date

I agree to provide \_\_\_\_\_ [*insert name of student*] with an induction to [*his/her*] work placement covering health, safety and welfare arrangements whilst on placement. I will provide regular supervision and will contact [*insert name of placement organiser*] if any problems arise with the placement or the student. I will provide [*insert name of placement organiser*] with feedback on progress on request.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Placement Provider Date

### Annex 3: Sample student induction checklist

<b>Student Induction Checklist</b>	
<b>Name of Student _____ Start Date _____</b>  The following should be included in students' induction to work placements. These should be checked off and dated by the student or placement organiser during the first week once they have been covered. Students should inform their placement organiser of any items not covered in the first week.	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>
Introduced to supervisor and key staff with roles explained	
Job duties and main tasks explained and understood	
Location of toilets, rest room, canteen, other facilities (as relevant)	
Lunch and refreshment arrangements explained (provision, times)	
Shown around work place and environment	
Any adjustments identified and requested from placement organiser or provider	
Instruction on equipment to be used	
Communications: how to use telephone, fax and email (if relevant)	
Staff arrangements	
Health and safety procedures	
Equal Opportunities policy	
Emergency procedures and fire exits	
First Aid arrangements	
Accident reporting procedures	
Other issues	

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NG15 0DJ

Telephone: 0845 602 2260 Fax: 0845 603 3360 minicom: 0845 605 5560 Email: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

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