POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Learner Work Placement Experience Policy

Policy Owner:	Director of Development & Support
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Contents

1. Introduction 2
2. Policy Scope 3
3. Policy Aim 3
4. Policy Statement 3
5. South West College Undertakings 4
6. Young Persons (under the age of 18) 6
7. Disability Discrimination 7
8. Communication Plan 7
9. Monitoring and Review 8

Related Documentation 9
Change Log 9
Communication 9
Communication Plan 9
Document Development 9
Approval Dates 10
Document History 11

1. Introduction

1.1 Each year many learners from South West College (the College) regularly attend work placements which are provided as an integral part of their vocational programmes. In addition, some learners may be required to undertake a short work experience as part of a module selected by curriculum staff or as taster sessions as part of a social inclusion programme. The College formulates these placements through partnerships with local employers and organisations with the aim of meeting the needs of both the participating learner and the employer.

1.2 Ensuring that learner placements meet appropriate health and safety standards requires close co-operation between the College's Placement Organisers, the Placement Providers, visiting Tutors, and the participating learners.

1.3 For the purposes of this document, the terms below will have the following meanings:

- **College** – is the South West College at which the learner is enrolled for the period of the placement.
- **Work Placement** – is a period of paid or unpaid work experience in industry which is undertaken as an integral part of the learner's course or as a short term work experience which forms part of an optional module selected by a tutor or course coordinator as part of a qualification.
- **Placement Provider** – is the person(s), partnerships, companies or organisations providing placement/employment to the learner.
- **Placement Organiser** – is the member of staff in the College who liaises with the learner and work placement provider to prepare for the commencement of a work placement eg the Training Support Officers.
- **Placement Approver** – is the designated senior member of staff who is authorised to approve the work placement ie
  - Head of Department;
  - Campus Manager;
  - Director of Development and Support;
  - Head of Apprenticeships;
  - Apprenticeship Delivery Lead; and
  - Head of Social Inclusion & Employability Programmes.

- **Visiting Tutors** - are individuals employed by, or contracted to, the College to visit learners on placements in order to assess progress.
- **Learner** – is any individual who is enrolled on a course at South West College.

2. Policy Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all programmes and courses, from Level 0 to Level 3 where a work placement is an integral and compulsory element or an optional element of the learner's course or programme.

3. Policy Aim

3.1 A work placement provides a valuable learning experience to the learner through a period of vocational work (which can be paid or unpaid) and which is often a mandatory part of the individual's course at South West College. A work placement assists the learner in gaining the practical experience and necessary skills required in a range of vocational areas and improving career prospects.

3.2 Ensuring the health and safety of learners while on work placement is an integral and central part to this whole process and experience. The aim of this policy is to ensure that South West College continues its duty of care to learners who are undertaking placements or work experience off-site as part of their course.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 South West College will ensure that all learners on work placement or work experience are placed in a safe and healthy working environment insofar as is reasonably practicable by taking the following measures:

- Ensuring that learners have been made aware of and understand the relevant hazards of the job in which they are being trained and are aware of the controls required to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.
- Ensuring compliance with Health and Safety legislation including that which is

specific to young people and the Working Time Directive.

- Making the Placement Provider and learner aware that the learner effectively holds a legal status similar to an employee during the time of placement.
- Ensuring the safeguarding of learners when on work placements.

5. South West College Undertakings

5.1 The College will ensure that all placement arrangements are planned well in advance to allow sufficient time to address any difficulties, to ensure that the learner is entering a safe and healthy working environment and that they are not exposed to any undue risk. This process will be documented at all stages and records kept for future reference.

5.2 The College will ensure that all documentation is fully completed prior to the work placement commencing.

5.3 The College will require the employer to designate a member of staff who will be responsible for the supervision of the learner while on work placement. While the learner is on placement, direct supervision for that learner transfers to the Placement Provider for the duration of the placement and the Placement Provider has a legal obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the learner.

5.4 The College will work with new Placement Providers to ensure that they understand what is involved and what their responsibilities are to the learner, and that appropriate insurances, safe systems and risk assessments are in place and that the premises are suitable for the employment of a learner.

5.5 South West College will not accept the amendment or non-completion of College forms and failure to observe this will prevent the placement of a learner.

5.6 South West College will ensure that any work placement proposed by a learner is evaluated to ensure that it has satisfactory health and safety procedures in place.

5.7 The College will require that the Placement Provider takes all necessary steps

including risk assessments for securing the health, safety and welfare of learners on work placement to the same extent and in the same manner as an employer is required to do in relation to employees by or under the relevant legislation for the time being in force in Northern Ireland.

5.8 The College will ensure that all work placement learners are given the correct health and safety information and training for their placement, including their duties under health and safety legislation.

5.9 The College will maintain contact with the learner during the work placement for assessment purposes and to monitor progress.

5.10 South West College will ensure that work placement providers are aware of their duty to report any safeguarding issues arising and of the means of reporting their concerns.

5.11 South West College will ensure that learners on work placement know how, and to whom, they can report safeguarding issues.

5.12 The College will ensure that the Placement Provider is aware of the need to report incidents involving the learner to the College and the means by which they can do so. These incidents can include such things as:

- Learner behaviour, attitude, approach to work.
- Any accidents or health issues involving the learner during the term of placement.
- Any near misses involving the learner, e.g. where a learner is almost involved in or almost caused an accident or is almost injured.
- Any serious complaint made by the learner, including complaints of harassment or bullying.

5.13 The College will investigate any negative feedback received during or on completion of the placement. This will involve discussions with both the learner and the Placement Provider

5.14 The College will retain all documentation pertaining to the work placement in line

with the FE Retention and Disposal Schedule or the requirement of the Programme. Safeguarding concerns and accidents or near misses, documentation will be retained in line with the FE Retention and Disposal Schedule.

6. Young Persons (under the age of 18)

6.1 South West College will work with prospective Placement Providers to ensure that they are aware that under Regulations 19 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations the Placement Provider has certain duties to fulfil in relation to young people (aged less than 18 years of age) before they start work ie:

- To undertake a risk assessment before the young person starts the work placement to ensure that all controls are in place. The Placement Provider may adopt a generic risk assessment which identifies core hazards and significant risks associated with a particular job or series of tasks.
- To ensure that the risk assessment takes into account their psychological or physical immaturity, inexperience and lack of awareness of existing or potential risks.
- To introduce control measures to eliminate or minimise the risks, so far as are reasonably practicable (see Figure 1).

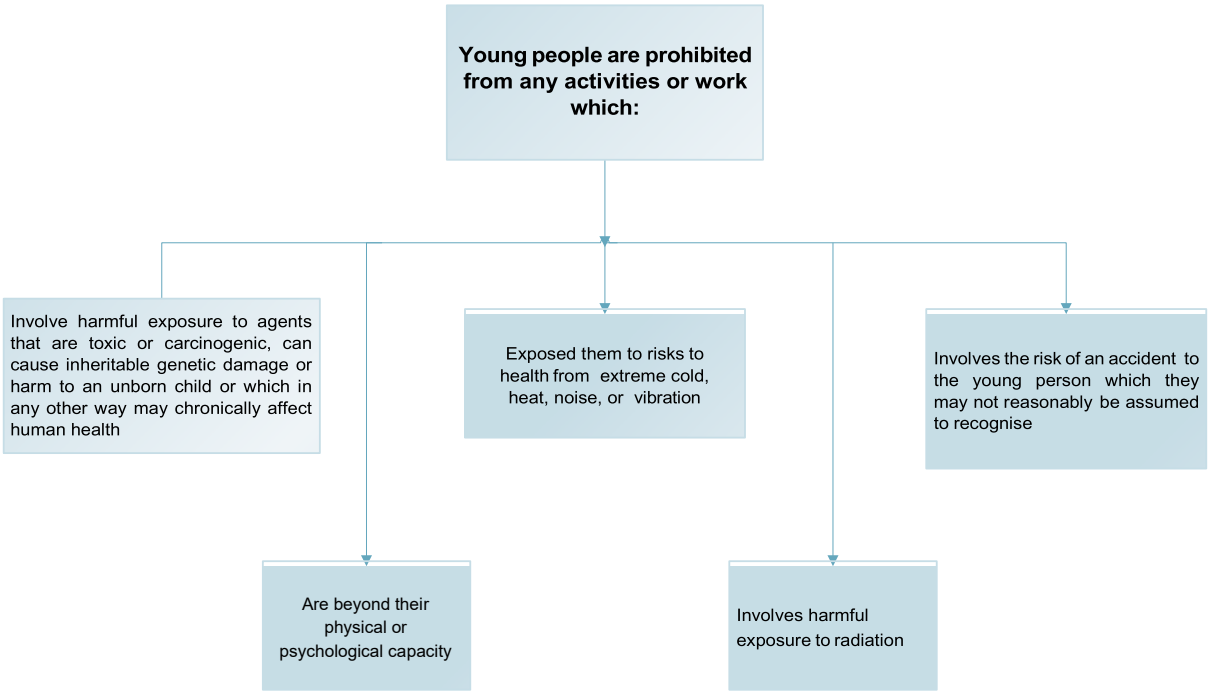


Figure 1 indicating the risks to Young Persons which employers must avoid

6.2 None of the above prevents employment of a person between school leaving age and 18 where:

- The activities or work are necessary for their training; and
- The young person will be supervised by a competent person; and
- The risk will be reduced to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable.

7. Disability Discrimination

7.1 The definition of a disability is “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

7.2 South West College will, as far as it is reasonably practicable, ensure that learners with a disability are not discriminated against for the purposes of work placements. The College will ensure that disabled learners have the same opportunities as others to benefit from work placements whilst undertaking a College course.

7.3 During the organisation of a work placement for a disabled learner the College, in agreement with the Placement Provider, will as far as is reasonably practicable ensure that the necessary procedures are in place and reasonable adjustments are made for providing a safe and valuable work placement experience.

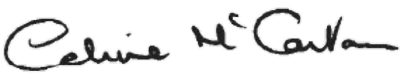
8. Communication Plan

8.1 The College will ensure that all staff involved in the organisation of work placements are aware of the requirements of this policy and associated procedure and are given the necessary training.

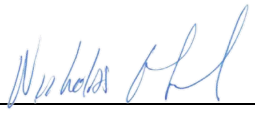
8.2 This Policy and associated procedure and documentation will be placed on a dedicated tile on the Staff Hub of Gateway.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 Compliance with this policy will be monitored at regular intervals. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed Principal and Chief Executive: 

Date: 04 November 2026

Signed Chair of the Governing Body: 

Date: 04 November 2026

Related Documentation

Title	Location	Owner
Standard Operating Procedure for the Evaluation, Approval and Monitoring of Work Placements	Gateway	
Work Placement and Experience SOP	Gateway	
Safeguarding Care and Welfare Policy	Gateway	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Gateway	

Change Log

Location	Change from deletion/addition	Change to
Placement Approver	Addition of Head of Apprenticeships, Apprenticeship Delivery Lead, Head of Social Inclusion and Employability Programmes	
Related Documentation	Addition of Work Placement and Experience SOP 4.0 Final (L2 Traineeships)	
Communication	Staff Job Titles updated	

Communication

Who needs to know (for action)	College Management Team Heads of Department/Deputy Heads/Curriculum Managers Heads/Deputy Heads of School Training Manager Work Based Learning Social Inclusion Work Placement Officers Training Support Officers
Who needs to be aware	All Staff

Communication Plan

Action	By Whom	By When
Upload to Gateway	Executive Support Officer	On approval
Communication to key staff	Director of Development & Support	On approval

Document Development

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Role
Ciaran McManus	Director of Development and Support
Christopher Robinson	Training Manager Work Based Learning
Martin Devlin	Health and Safety Officer

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Name	Organisation	Date
Training Managers Sector Working Group	All 6 NI Colleges	September 2024
Heads of Department, Deputy Heads of Department, Curriculum Managers		August 2024
Training Support Officers/Placement Officers		August/September 2024
Training Manager Work Based Learning		September 2024

Approval Dates

Approved by	Date
Governing Body	04 November 2026

Document History

Issue no. under review	Date of review:	Persons involved in review	Changes made after review. Yes/No If yes refer to change log	New Issue No.	If changes made was consultation required?	If changes made was Equality Screening required?
V1.0				V2.0		
V2.0	Sept 2025	Ciaran McManus Christopher Robinson Martin Devlin	Yes	V3.0	No	No
V3.0	Sept 2026	Ciaran McManus Louise Higgins Noreen McGirr Siobhan Breen Chris Evans	Yes	V3.1	No	No