

TUC Model Traineeships Charter – guidance for union representatives

This charter has been written to help unions negotiate for **high quality** Traineeships that safeguard against the exploitation of young people. The TUC believes that **high quality** Traineeships can help young people gain the skills required to undertake an Apprenticeship or find secure employment.

The sole focus of a Traineeship should be on providing a learning opportunity which supports a young person make the transition into work. In this respect, it is different from an Apprenticeship where the focus is on learning and working. The government has not made it a requirement that Trainees are paid an allowance or wage. Therefore unions can play an important role in making sure that Trainees are paid where they undertake work of a similar value to other employees.

Certain criteria will need to be met to ensure that Traineeships are **high quality**. Without effective safeguards and union involvement poor quality Traineeships could lead to the exploitation of young people or existing workers being displaced from their jobs.

If you wish to negotiate with your employer about putting in place a Traineeship programme, you may wish to consider the following points:

Duration of work experience placements

- A series of short, structured, well supervised work placements may well be more appropriate than one lengthy placement. A single lengthy placement can lead to the Trainee being exploited by undertaking productive work for little or no pay.

Job displacement

- Trainees should never be used to displace existing workers.

Content of a Traineeships Framework

- Traineeships should be designed to give young people the skills relevant to their aims and needs and the local labour market. Work experience placements must be properly planned and structured to support young people and enable progression to a job or further training
- Trainees should receive careers guidance. This will help the Trainee develop skills relevant to their future career aims and improve their chances of getting a job or further training
- Where possible Traineeships should be designed to help progression onto an Apprenticeship. Ideally, qualifications undertaken on a Traineeship should support access to an Apprenticeship
- Development of English and Maths skills, most commonly through Functional Skills will be a core element of any Traineeship. ULRs can get involved in supporting young Trainees gain these skills. ULRs have a proven track record in this area of learning
- Trainees should receive information about workplace employment rights and responsibilities. This will help Trainees make the transition into quality employment.

Guaranteed Interview for an Apprenticeship/Employment

- Where the employer has an appropriate Apprenticeship or other training vacancy or job vacancy, Trainees should be given a guaranteed interview for these opportunities at the end of their work placement

- Trainees should be given constructive feedback and offered a reference at the end of their work placement

Pay

- Where work of value to the employer is being undertaken, employers should pay Trainees. Lengthy work placements are likely to lead to work of value being undertaken. Unions will need to be vigilant and make sure that Trainees are paid at least the National Minimum Wage and where possible the rate for the job. Although Trainees are exempt from the National Minimum Wage, this should not prevent them being paid where appropriate.
- Some Trainees will be entitled to apply to the 16-19 Bursary Fund, or the Vulnerable Student Bursary to secure funding to help them undertake a Traineeship. Unions can raise awareness of the Bursary Fund to enable the most disadvantaged young people gain access to a Traineeship. For details see <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

Health and Safety of Trainees

- The Health and Safety Executive has published guidance for employers and young people on work experience placements; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/workexperience/>
- The employer should carry out a risk assessment in the workplace which takes into account the particular issues that affect young people, including their lack of experience and awareness of risk. They should also consult with the union Health and Safety representatives on the risk assessment and the measures they intend to take.
- Trainees should be given sufficient training on health and safety and fire safety to ensure they are not a risk to themselves or others. Training may also need to be given to other staff on the specific risks involved in working with trainees.

Bargaining ideas for union reps

- You should consider including the development of **high quality** Traineeships on your existing bargaining agenda to encourage employers to help the young unemployed
- It may be useful to put in place a Traineeships Agreement between the union and employer to ensure Trainees receive a high quality learning opportunity (please see the checklist link below)
- Negotiate for training allowances/expenses to help young people undertake a Traineeship e.g travel costs/ meal allowances etc.
- Get involved in the discussions between the employer and provider to ensure they are both signed up to this charter. It may be possible to recommend to your employer to use a provider that you already have a good relationship with, or a provider who has been awarded a unionlearn Quality Award. Providers should also support the aims of this charter
- Agree on a monitoring and reviewing schedule on how Traineeships work. This could allow you access to the Trainee to talk about trade unions and also to make sure they have a good experience in your workplace
- Union representatives, especially union learning reps, are ideally placed to act as Mentors to Trainees
- Ensure appropriate help is provided by the employer and the learning provider to those with learning differences and difficulties (for instance, dyslexia)
- It may be necessary to offer support, guidance and representation to any Trainees involved in the workplace grievance/disciplinary procedures
- All Trainees should also have a right to join the union
- If unions have concerns about the quality of training from the provider these should be raised with the provider and employer in the first instance. If necessary, complaints should then be raised with the Skills Funding Agency/Education Funding Agency/OFSTED.

Unionlearn has developed further resources related to Traineeships. Please visit the link below to find further information around:

- An overview of the Traineeships framework
- A Traineeship Agreement Checklist
- An outline of what **high quality** work experience placement should comprise of
- TUC policy on careers guidance
- TUC policy on Apprenticeships

www.unionlearn.org.uk/youngpeople