

How to get Maidstone's young

THE Downs Mail has joined with Maidstone Council to promote work opportunities for the town's young people.

During the next six months we will be featuring articles to help the future of Maidstone find out which education, employment and training opportunities are available in the borough.

There will also be information for businesses who might be interested in offering opportunities to young people.

We will let you know about work experience, apprenticeships

and starting your own business. Through case studies we will show you what it's like working in those jobs and the responsibilities you can expect. You will also find out more about developing a

career in certain industries.

If you own or manage a business, we will highlight the support available to you to offer opportunities to young people – and why you might want to take it up.

The benefits of work experience

HAVE you ever wondered what it is like to do a particular job or work in a specific industry?

A work experience placement is a great way to find out. You can gain practical experience in the industry, get used to working in a team, develop your skills and improve your chances of getting a job.

Advice for young people

So you've decided that a work experience placement might be a good idea to help you find employment or boost your skill set, but how

do you organise one?

There are various ways you can search – online through company websites or recruitment companies; by writing directly to the business; through family or friends; or through the job centre. Whichever method you choose, the same principles still apply:

Make sure that your CV demonstrates what skills you've developed through your studies, extracurricular activities or previous work. Tailor your CV to reflect the work of the company you are applying to.

If you are making a speculative application, explain why you want to work for the company and the skills and experience you can offer.

Find out the specifics of your role, what the manager is looking for and whether this fits with your expectations. Ask whether there are any training opportunities and the support that might be available.

It can sometimes take a while to arrange a placement so think ahead and speak with the company well in advance of when you'd like to start the work.

If you don't get a response to your letter or email, why not give them a phone call to make sure that they've received it?

Remember, the placement does not have to be working in your dream job.

Think about the skills you'll gain, and how they can help you apply for that dream job. You might learn about team working, communication skills or how to use a particular computer programme. Look at the placement as a step on to the career ladder.



Case study: learning the ropes at Maidstone Council

Hannah McKay, customer services advisor

"I came to a work experience coffee morning at Maidstone Council hoping to find a placement in an admin or customer service role to help with future employment. I met lots of managers and had a thorough chat about the types of roles and departments available.

"A week after the coffee morning I was offered an eight-week placement with the customer services team, with hours to work around my daughter's school times.

"When I started in the contact centre I was paired with a customer services advisor to start learning about the different services. It wasn't like you expect work experience to be – with the 'boring' jobs like filing and printing. Instead I started training straight away. I

picked it up quite quickly, and as soon as I felt confident I was allowed on the phones.

"While I was doing my work experience placement, a job came up, so I'm now employed in the contact centre. I really enjoy my role and everyone's really friendly. It's given me a great opportunity and there's room for progression too."

A manager's perspective: Louise Wenzel, contact centre team manager

"It's important to support work experience schemes – most employers ask for experience, so people need to be given the opportunity. Hannah joined our team for eight weeks and really impressed me, so when we had some vacant hours that suited her, she joined us on a 12-month contract.



Louise Wenzel

"In the contact centre we have to spend a lot of time training the person so that they get the most out of the experience. We're very flexible with hours, but obviously the more someone is able to work, the more they'll get out of the experience.

"I work closely with the team, so I regularly caught up with Hannah

to see how she was doing.

"Having someone else organise the work experience placement once I had picked the candidate made it much easier, and overall it has been a great support to our team. Our last two work experience placements have been very dedicated and keen to learn and get involved, which has made it all worthwhile."

●TO find out what is available, the Information Hub on the Downs Mail website has a list of employment and training openings offered by local companies and organisations.

If you would like to apply for a role or want to advertise a work opportunity for free, go to www.downsmail.co.uk/information_hub/

people ready for employment

Employers can make it happen

OFFERING work experience has many benefits that far outweigh any perceived "hassles".

- Gives you more options when it comes to recruiting new staff.
- Raises your community profile – recognition in the local community as a company investing in the future of local residents by providing a meaningful experience.
- Provides additional resources to help with a project or increase in workload.
- Influences the quality of future employees, while providing an opportunity for current staff to develop their management skills.

Maidstone Council and Jobcentre Plus want to make it as easy as

possible for businesses to offer work experience. They will help with organising informal interviews to make sure that the candidates have the right skills and competencies for the placement you're offering. This also gives you a chance to find out what they're hoping to gain from the placement, so that both of your expectations are clear.

They will also cover travel expenses and provide you with support for the duration of the work experience placement.

Think you could offer a placement or want to know more? Contact the economic development team at Maidstone Council on



01622 602344 or email: economicdevelopment@maidstone.gov.uk

starting point for you to check out: www.work-experience.org
www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Find out more online

THERE are lots of websites with information about work experience. These should be a good

● Follow National Work Experience week from October 13 to 17 on Twitter, using the #weweek2014 hashtag

In next month's edition:

THINK you know about apprenticeships? Think again. We will give you all the information you need to make a decision about starting an apprenticeship, plus help for businesses.

Downs Mail Online

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The Downs Mail information hub is a community facility, which can be found on our website, for local residents and organisations to use.

Search for information or promote your organisation and its services absolutely free.

You can find your favourite charity, local authority services, clubs, societies, groups and recreational facilities, events, employment and training opportunities, advice on health and well being and lots more besides.

- Employment & Training openings
- Events
- Charities
- Schools & Colleges
- Local Authority Services
- Health & Wellbeing
- Support Groups & Helplines
- Clubs & Organisations
- Groups & Societies



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