

# PRESS RELEASE

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**For immediate release: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

## Local businesses publish open letter to work experience pupils

**Coinciding with Responsible Business Week, a group of leading local companies has written to school pupils about to embark on a work experience placement, giving them tips on how to get the best out of it and make a good impression at their host employer. The guidance has been published on behalf of 51 businesses, all members of the Reciprocate responsible business group.**

The short letter has been put together by companies with many years' experience of offering placements to pupils in years 10 and 11 of secondary school, and gives practical advice on professional standards of behaviour, preparedness, and the sorts of things it might be useful to reflect on before and after the placement. It has initially been sent to 19 schools across Oxfordshire, to share with 3,000 pupils due out on work experience in the coming three months. The letter will be sent to all remaining Oxfordshire schools for the next academic year.

**The open letter can be found on the Reciprocate website, [www.reciprocateox.org](http://www.reciprocateox.org).**

The businesses, which are all members of Oxfordshire Community Foundation's responsible business group Reciprocate, suggest that school pupils keep "six 'p's" in mind when taking part in their work experience placement:

1. Be PROFESSIONAL
2. Be PREPARED
3. Be POLITE
4. PUT yourself out there
5. Be PRACTICAL
6. Take time to PONDER

Businesses in Oxfordshire, in common with the rest of the UK, report a significant skills gap and difficulty filling posts. With an ageing population, this problem is set to worsen if the young people who form the future workforce are not equipped with workplace skills. Reciprocate members recognise that giving young people experience that will inspire them to develop these practical skills is hugely important for the long-term wellbeing of their business.

Reciprocate businesses also aspire to making work experience more accessible to a wider and more diverse group of pupils. Accessing professional work experience can be a gateway to a better future for young people who do not have many choices, introducing them to networks and helping them to make more informed career choices about a wider range of industries than they might have considered before.

Robin Peake, Development Manager at local youth work charity Thrive, whose young people contributed towards the open letter, comments: "Work experience can highlight the gulf in opportunities given to the richest and poorest young people in Oxfordshire. For some young people who have grown up knowing doctors or lawyers, these professions seem normal. But for some young people, they feel alien. When a young person's role models are unemployed, it's little wonder that they have low aspirations for their work experience placement.

"I'm delighted that OCF and Reciprocate are levelling the playing field by letting every young person know what to do to have a successful work experience placement. These tips will demystify the process and help young people unleash their potential – something that is surely good for local employers and communities."

Heather Carter, Operations Director at Blenheim Palace, says: "It is so important that businesses invest time and effort into encouraging young people to consider their future careers. Offering opportunities to them to experience the workplace in a planned way is hugely beneficial to a young person in this process."

Blenheim Palace is a key Reciprocate member and has taken the lead in producing the open letter, alongside construction company Beard and work experience brokerage service O2i. Earlier this year this working group produced an eight-page best-practice handbook for other businesses on how to offer top-quality work experience placements. [This guide can be downloaded here.](#)

Businesses that would like to offer work experience should contact O2i Manager Helen Haines at [Helen.Haines@oxfordshireLEP.com](mailto:Helen.Haines@oxfordshireLEP.com).

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## Notes for editors

### About Reciprocate

- Reciprocate is a group of businesses that are working together to improve the lives of people in Oxfordshire. Membership of Reciprocate enables companies to become more effective and strategic in the way they support their local community, and is an initiative of Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF).
- Reciprocate member companies believe that, by working together, sharing ideas and collaborating on projects, they can realise their good intentions through the power of many. There is no obligatory cost to joining, with members making an 'impact pledge' stating what they promise to give to the community as part of their membership.

### About Oxfordshire Community Foundation

- Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) is an independent charity that connects people who care with causes that matter. We inspire local philanthropy, and nurture community-based solutions to key social problems across Oxfordshire.
- We are one of 46 community foundations in the UK, and over 1,800 similar foundations around the world. Community foundations collaborate with private philanthropists, family trusts, businesses and the public sector to provide a permanent, flexible and growing source of local charitable funding.

## Contact

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The following photo can be supplied in high resolution:



*Caption: Pupils from Marlborough School take part in work experience at Blenheim Palace*