



Over the past few weeks we have experienced the row over the controversial work experience programme and the link with losing benefits.

The following highlight the issues around this work experience issue.

- 🌀 The scheme provides for up to 8 weeks work experience
- 🌀 The work experience is provided to people that are claiming benefits
- 🌀 The scheme is voluntary although if an individual agrees to take part and then leaves after a certain period they may lose their benefits
- 🌀 There are some unscrupulous employers making use of the scheme to the detriment of employing staff
- 🌀 The work experience is free for the companies and the individual doesn't get paid

It is clear that work experience is valuable and that over 35,000 people have taken part and a large number of people have found it useful. However, those opposed to the scheme claim that it is in effect slavery due to the lack of salary and the types of work available.

The scheme clearly continues to pay benefits to the individuals taking part but that doesn't seem to satisfy the no campaign. It could be argued that the individual receive more than the national minimum wage as they are on benefits. However, this is an argument that depends on a lot of variables and circumstances although clearly the individual is still in receipt of money albeit not salary.

It has been reported that 200 people (0.5% of those taken part) have had their benefits terminated due to leaving the scheme after the week trial period. Through our experience of employing people through the jobcentre plus it is rare that benefits are removed on the first offence. Using this assumption it would suggest that the 0.5% had other issues that concerned the benefits agency as well as leaving the work experience scheme.

The no campaign complains that the scheme is therefore not voluntary due to the potential loss of benefits. Perhaps losing benefits is a just approach when an individual leaves the scheme for no good reason. The no campaign would suggest to the contrary and that the whole scheme is part of the money for nothing culture that big businesses promote. Would it be possible to suggest that if an individual pulls out of the scheme then they should not be provided with benefits? The money for nothing culture works both ways.

The no campaign have a legitimate concern around unscrupulous employers taking advantage of the scheme.



Clearly this is an issue and the work experience programme needs to avoid such situations and employers. It is easy to assume that those administering the scheme are not sufficiently skilled to recognise unscrupulous employers (of which there are a number!) if you take the track record of Jobcentre Plus. Ideally the work experience should be tailored to individual needs although there are a wide variety of opportunities from staking shelves to working in the charity sector available to people claiming benefits. The programme needs to make sure that this doesn't happen or at least is rare. However, without the input from individuals how is it possible for the programme to address these concerns.

Having recruited a lot of people from the Job Centre from all levels of skill there is a particular thing missing in the long term unemployed which is relevant and up to date work experience. Those that are more successful have had voluntary or some sort of work experience to demonstrate their value to a new employer.

To summarise it is clear that work experience is a good thing and working for benefits is also a good thing. The only concern is that individual, organisations and charities fail to realise the benefits of this scheme due to the level of protests recently. We at HR Inc would like to see more compulsion to carry out work experience for those on benefits and particularly the long term unemployed.

You can watch Angus Lavin on the YouTube HR Inc Channel commenting on this particular issue. Watch out for our next 'Thoughts and Review' and video blogs.

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