

Induction tips to help young people find their feet

The following pointers reflect the experiences of Talent Coaches working on the GM's Hidden Talent youth employment programme.

Policies

- Asking young people to read through long, jargon-packed policies can lead to important details not being picked up on and / or forgotten. A handbook for the new starter to complete can be more effective. This can contain questions that young people have to seek the answers to e.g. "What are the three stages to getting a day off approved?" or "What are the rules for leaving the site on breaks?"

Doing this builds confidence from having to ask questions of colleagues and can help with relationship building.

Time keeping and absences

- Within a new starter handbook, include a personal checklist of hours and break times for young people to complete and reference.
- Tell young people specifically who they need to notify if ill or needing to take unplanned leave. Explain clearly that leaving / or a message may not be enough: some young people will ring once and think, "Right, I've done my bit."
- Don't assume young people understand the significance of taking sick days within a probationary period. Explain how the business suffers when they are not in: they are vital team members.
- Be mindful of using terms like 'probationary period' without explanation. It is quite possible that someone who has never worked before wouldn't know what this is.
- Be aware that young people may not initially have the self-discipline to work flexibly. Consider that flexi-time is something that might have to be 'earned' (within reason; working around caring responsibilities, regular medical appointments etc. needs to be considered from the off) whilst a young person establishes a routine.
- Be clear on finish times in the first week, especially if they are different for the first few days (e.g. shorter days); double check that young people know when to report the next day. Send text / WhatsApp reminders in first week.

Pay

- Talk young people through deductions on payslips. You should check to understand that young staff understand what National Insurance Contributions and pension contributions are, and why they exist. Use an example payslip to do this before their first pay day (so that deductions are not a nasty shock!).
- Explain what terms like 'payment in arrears' and 'a week-in-hand' mean.



- Consider offering an advance to help with travel / uniform / equipment costs and spreading the repayment across a few pay cheques.

Rules

- Explain why a rule exists. Take wearing headphones as an example. A young person may think, “Yeah, I’ve got them in, but I’m working, what’s the big deal?” You may need to explain that a colleague might want to get their attention, or that they may risk missing out on important information when colleagues have nearby conversations.
- Don’t overreact at a first indiscretion but equally don’t be afraid to approach and discuss problematic behaviour.
- Before young people start, talk to the wider team about the importance of setting a good example e.g. “Whilst our new apprentices settle in, try not to use your mobiles at your desks if you can.”

Encouraging confidence

- Be precise about where to go on a first day. Anticipate if a new starter might find navigating to a certain check-in point difficult, and offer to meet at an easier location.
- Provide a checklist of ‘getting to know you’ questions that a young person has to ask their colleagues. The questions could be e.g. ‘Find out who Dave supports and why?’
- Providing a buddy or mentor who is not the line manager can encourage young people to raise questions they wouldn’t otherwise ask out of fear (“They’ll think I should know this”).
- Consider making recently qualified apprentices / last year’s intake into buddies. They will be able to relate well with what it’s like to be new, and new starters can feel more comfortable asking questions of them.
- Linking to external mentoring agencies can help provide young people with additional advice on career direction.

Task setting

- Set tasks with clear parameters and instructions.
- Don’t assume young staff have the implicit knowledge required to complete tasks. Say that it’s okay not to know something – nobody is expecting an expert. Remember that a young person may be doing certain jobs for the very first time. They may say they can do something they can’t – to try and prove themselves. Make sure they know they can ask for help.
- Agree on how long to spend on a job and check-in regularly to assess progress.

