

Business in the

Community

Business Action on Homelessness

Starting Work Guidance for Line Managers



Produced with the support of

PEARN **KANDOLA**

Because all business is psychology.

About Business in the Community and Business Action on Homelessness

Business in the Community mobilises business for good. We work with business to build a sustainable future for people and planet.

Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) is a national campaign run by Business in the Community. We support homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness to gain and sustain employment. We work with over 140 businesses and 280 voluntary organisations UK-wide.

BAOH is supported by eight national business partners. They are: Accenture, Barclays, Bain & Company, Carillion plc, KPMG, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Marks & Spencer and Royal Mail. We receive additional funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

www.bitc.org.uk/baoh

About Pearn Kandola

Pearn Kandola is a leading practice of business psychologists, specialising in assessment, development, diversity and well-being. The practice has been actively involved in applying business focused psychology to developments in the international workplace since 1984. The company works with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to develop skills to harness the potential of the workforce through consultancy, training and research. It has offices in Oxford, Dublin and Paris.

www.pearnkandola.com

About this guidance

This guidance has been produced to help companies employing people who have completed the Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) Ready for Work programme.

People attending Ready for Work have often been out of work for more than 12 months. Most will have had to overcome several barriers in addition to their homelessness to get to the point where they are ready for work, including mental health problems or drug or alcohol addiction.

Research conducted by BAOH in 2010 showed that a good induction was critical to whether or not Ready for Work graduates settled well into their new role and sustained work. Getting the basics right at the start helps build the emotional resilience of individuals, so that they are better able to cope with setbacks further down the line.

This booklet sets out BAOH's 'best practice principles' for good inductions for people with a homeless background. It also contains handy checklists, detailing the type of information that Ready for Work clients find particularly helpful.

We hope this guidance will help you to create a thriving and diverse workplace.

Best Practice Principles

Ensure clarity of role

Ensure that the individual knows what is expected of them. Everyone needs this but it is particularly important for those lacking confidence.

Ensure that they know:

- The objectives of the role
- How it fits into the work of the department/organisation
- The outputs - what will they have produced or achieved if they do their job effectively during the course of the day/week/month.

Set achievable objectives

Ensure that the person is able to achieve some goals early on in order to build confidence.

Remain watchful without being too intrusive - a difficult line to tread. Allow the person to do their work but let them know that you are there to give support.

As confidence builds give more responsibility always being careful to monitor the level of stress the person is under.

Be patient!

Mistakes may well occur but take your time to ensure that they understand what happened and what needs to be learnt from it.

Provide constructive feedback

Make sure that you give praise for a job well done. Make the feedback specific e.g.

“The customer was very pleased with the way you assisted them. Well done, that is exactly what we are looking for.”

Vague or non-specific feedback may make people feel patronised or that it is insincere.

Negative feedback should focus on what went wrong and not on the person:

“Our customer service policy states that customers shouldn't be left waiting for more than 5 minutes. Can you tell me the reason this didn't happen?”

Make sure they know what support is available

One of the key factors determining good emotional resilience is support. Therefore during the induction employers should discuss support with the individual and put in place ways of supporting them.

This might involve:

- Mentors / job buddies
- Human resources
- Who to contact if something goes wrong
- Your role - how often will you meet will meet with them, how can you help.

Introduce them to key people

Don't leave things to chance: introduce them to key people personally. This will include work colleagues but other people like HR advisers, payroll clerks, receptionists.

The more personal the contact the more likely a bond will be established. Remember, because of their background, your new starter may find it difficult to make a connection, so any help you can provide in overcoming these initial barriers will be extremely helpful.

Provide opportunities for socialising

All organisations have informal ways of socialising. It may be over coffee, lunch, going for drinks after work. Make sure that your new starter knows about these and introduce them to other staff involved in clubs that might interest them. However, if your new recruit declines the offer of a drink after work, don't assume they are not interested in meeting people. Sometimes, the pub is not the best environment, particularly if they have had to overcome alcohol addiction. Try something else instead.

Checklists

Getting Started

The period from job offer through to the end of the first week of employment is the most nerve-wracking for Ready for Work graduates.

As soon as they have received their written contract, they need to start the process of signing off their out-of-work benefits and budgeting with their salary. This is often quite a stressful time, as individuals may be concerned about cash-flow before they receive their first pay check.

If fluctuating hours is a key requirement for the role, this will also be a concern as it may affect the level of in-work benefits that they receive each month so they will have to plan for this.

On top of all this, they may be worried about settling in well and doing a good job.

The following checklist will help you make sure you let your new recruit is equipped with the right knowledge in the run up to and during their first week of employment.

Have you told your new starter...

Before they start:

1. What time they will need to arrive on their first day?
2. What time they will normally need to start and finish each day?
3. What hours they will normally be working each week?
4. What they should wear?
5. When and how they will get paid?
6. If there is an option to be paid weekly rather than monthly, especially in the first 3 months?

On their first day:

7. When they can take their lunch-break?
8. What the rules are around smoking?
9. Who else is in their team?
10. What they should do if they are running late or sick?
11. Whether they need to sign in and out of the building or site each day?

In the first week:

12. Who else in their team they can go to for help if you are not around?
13. What they should do if they need to take time off to attend a medical appointment or to sort out their benefits?
14. What the procedure is for booking holidays?

Settling in - the unwritten rules of the workplace

Every workplace has rules about what to wear, when to arrive, how to book holidays etc. These are usually written down and easy to understand. However, each workplace also has a set of 'unwritten rules' - codes of behaviour that people stick by but which are hard to learn.

People tend to just get a 'feel' for what they should and shouldn't do at work by picking up on certain clues. However, for those people who have been out of the workplace for a long time, this might be difficult to do. Not understanding the unwritten rules can lead to anxiety and may impact performance.

Have you told your new starter...

1. How long they are allowed to take for cigarette breaks?
2. If they are allowed to leave their mobile phones on their desks/about their person?
3. If there is flexibility with the dress code - for example, dress-down days?
4. If unpaid overtime is expected during busy periods?
5. What values your organisation lives by?
6. What behaviour is expected of employees?

Making Progress

When your new starter has been doing their job for a couple of weeks, they will probably want to get an idea of how they are doing. They might also be starting to think about how they can progress as quickly as possible but not be sure about where to start.

Have you told your new starter...

1. How they will know they are doing a good job?
2. How often you will meet with them to discuss progress?
3. What their objectives are for the short-medium term, to help them stay on track?
4. If there is training or other support available to help them do their job well?
5. If there is an official appraisal process where they will be assessed on their performance?
6. What they should do if they are struggling with something?

Business in the

Community

Business in the Community stands for responsible business

We advise support and challenge our members to improve their performance to create a sustainable future for people and planet

www.bitc.org.uk

Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7RQ

T +44 (0)20 7566 8650

F +44 (0)20 7253 1877

E info@bitc.org.uk

November 2010

Registered details 137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ, Telephone 020 7566 8650
Registered Charity No: 297716, Company Limited by Guarantee No: 1619253

