MANAGING FUTURE TALENT

Today’s young people, tomorrow’s workforce
The CIPD’s purpose is to champion better work and working lives by improving practices in people and organisation development, for the benefit of individuals, businesses, economies and society. Our research work plays a critical role – providing the content and credibility for us to drive practice, raise standards and offer advice, guidance and practical support to the profession. Our research also informs our advocacy and engagement with policy-makers and other opinion-formers on behalf of the profession we represent.

To increase our impact, in service of our purpose, we’re focusing our research agenda on three core themes: the future of work, the diverse and changing nature of the workforce, and the culture and organisation of the workplace.

**WORK**
Our focus on work includes what work is and where, when and how work takes place, as well as trends and changes in skills and job needs, changing career patterns, global mobility, technological developments and new ways of working.

**WORKFORCE**
Our focus on the workforce includes demographics, generational shifts, attitudes and expectations, the changing skills base and trends in learning and education.

**WORKPLACE**
Our focus on the workplace includes how organisations are evolving and adapting, understanding of culture, trust and engagement, and how people are best organised, developed, managed, motivated and rewarded to perform at their best.

**ABOUT US**

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. We have over 130,000 members internationally – working in HR, learning and development, people management and consulting across private businesses and organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. We are an independent and not-for-profit organisation, guided in our work by the evidence and the front-line experience of our members.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing a young person to the world of work: learning the ropes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing structure and good communication</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and supporting a young person</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sources of support</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth unemployment is a key issue for the UK, with too many young people being overlooked for opportunities, despite businesses’ concerns about where their future talent is coming from. It is an issue which unites policy-makers, employers and third sector organisations, including unions, all of whom share a common interest in tackling the problem and reducing the implications for young people, business and society.

Employers play a central role when it comes to improving young people’s access to the labour market. Getting employers involved in addressing youth unemployment by helping to prepare young people for work and making their own organisations more ‘youth friendly’ is something the CIPD has been leading on since our Learning to Work programme was launched almost two years ago. During this time we’ve seen a surge in the number of employers who are interested in increasing engagement with young people, including by offering more access routes into their organisations, such as Apprenticeships and school-leaver programmes. This is something we should celebrate but continue to build on.

However, creating routes into the labour market is only one half of the equation. It is also crucial that when a young worker first enters the workplace, the experience sets them up for a long and successful career. Here the role of the line manager is crucial in helping young employees with the transition into work. For any employee, a good line manager is vital. However, for a young person new to the world of work and inexperienced in workplace cultures, employer expectations and day-to-day processes, their needs can be different from those of a more experienced worker. As such, they may require a different level of support, reassurance and guidance to navigate through those early days before comfortably establishing their place in the wider team.

This guide, which draws on a wealth of experience from managers from a range of sectors and sizes of organisation, aims to highlight and share good practice around how to create a workplace that gives young employees the opportunity to thrive. We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that have taken part in this research.

There is a clear case for facilitating and supporting young people’s access to the labour market and tackling youth unemployment more generally. But what’s in it for line managers? Why should they invest their time in developing and supporting young employees? As the employer case studies in this guide demonstrate, managing a young employee and supporting their progression is not only extremely rewarding and a development opportunity in its own right, but get it right and your investment will pay off as the young person becomes a skilled and committed member of the team.

To develop this guide we have partnered with Acas and unionlearn, two organisations who are natural partners of the CIPD with expertise in the area of good workplace relationships. We are grateful for their assistance and input into this project, helping to create and deliver a more rounded approach to the issue.

We hope that this guide will be helpful to all managers who are currently working with younger employees and will be a useful tool for those keen to expand the number of young people joining their organisation.

Katerina Rüdiger,
Head of Skills and Policy Campaigns,
CIPD
INTRODUCTION

‘If you introduce and manage a young person successfully, they can become part of the fabric of your organisation. It can’t just be something that your organisation “does”. The welfare and development of the apprentice needs to be part of the mission and strategy of your organisation – not just something that happens on its own.’

Chris Wright, Education Producer, Royal Exchange Theatre

For a young person, the experience of entering the workplace and adjusting to working life, perhaps for the first time, while also learning and performing tasks they may never have done before, can be a daunting prospect. For their line manager, the need to provide the right practical support and guidance to ensure that the young person settles in well and continues to develop and progress can also mean different challenges than those they are used to in managing more experienced colleagues. This guide provides an overview of good practice tips and suggestions from employers on how to provide the right level of support to help inexperienced workers adapt to the workplace, so that they will be positively challenged as they start their new role and help contribute to the success of your business.
INTRODUCING A YOUNG PERSON TO THE WORLD OF WORK: LEARNING THE ROPES

Starting a new job can be an experience that is exciting and worrying in equal measure, regardless of age. Being introduced to an array of new people and new roles, trying to learn new names and to remember the layout of the building while taking on board your new responsibilities can result in a stressful first few weeks. However, more experienced workers can often forget that younger, less experienced workers are also – on top of all the normal stresses associated with beginning a new role – learning what it means to be part of a working environment entirely from scratch.

The first few weeks and months of work are particularly important for a young person who is new to the world of work. This period is crucial in helping them develop the confidence, skills and experience they need to become a successful part of their employer’s organisation, so providing appropriate support is crucial. But what does that look like in practice?

Employers who have experience in successfully providing such support, and who have reaped the business benefits of doing so, tell us that there are six key steps line managers can take during the young person’s first few weeks:

- Provide a good induction.
- Manage colleagues’ expectations.
- Make sure the new starter is comfortable with the ‘basics’ of the job.
- Establish and communicate objectives early.
- Provide regular opportunities to discuss everyday issues.
- Build a trusting relationship.

INDUCTION

Research by the Institute for Employment Studies for Acas has found that providing a well-thought-through induction is not only valuable for employers in helping young people learn the job and adapt to the workplace effectively, it is also a form of support that is generally appreciated by the young workers themselves. A good induction can ensure that they better understand their role, reducing the chances of them feeling that the job is not living up to expectations, and positively contributing to the development of a sense of loyalty and commitment to their organisation. This is particularly the case if the induction introduces the young workers to an understanding of the organisation, beyond just the young person’s own specific role, and if it is conducted as early as possible after starting the job (Acas 2013). For Robert Allan, HR Director at Apex Hotels, the induction plays a crucial role in helping prepare new starters for life in the organisation:

‘We spend time getting them work-ready and inducting them into the business. We put in a lot of preparatory work – tours “behind the scenes”, workshops, expectations-setting, all done before the young person starts working.’

Robert Allan, HR Director, Apex Hotels

The appropriate length and content of an induction will vary depending on the nature of the organisation and the young person’s role. However, the key points a good induction should aim to cover are (Acas 2013):

- Help the young person settle into the business and make them feel comfortable in their new surroundings.
- Provide a good introduction to their role and how it fits within their team and the organisation as a whole.
- Provide practical guidance in areas such as working time, breaks, pay and tax, working conditions, dress codes, and health and safety in the workplace (remembering that those new to the world of work might need more explanation on these issues than those with more experience).
- Help the young worker understand their duties and their manager’s expectations around performance, including probation and processes for feedback and appraisal.
- Clearly explain the lines of authority in the organisation, including an introduction to the roles of the supervisors and managers.
- Provide reassurance about where they can go for help if difficulties arise.
- Give the young person opportunities to get to know colleagues and to integrate effectively into the wider workplace culture.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for the young person to ask questions.

In covering these issues, an induction provides an employer with the opportunity to:

- get to know the young person and understand their previous experience
- identify strengths and areas for development
- enquire about the young person’s goals
- identify any concerns they might have and take steps to provide the right information and reassurance
- make sure that the young person gets off to the best possible all-round start.

MANAGING COLLEAGUES’ EXPECTATIONS

In managing a relatively inexperienced worker, it is not just the one-to-one relationship that is important. Where a line manager has responsibility for a team, it is also important to ensure that the new starter fits into the team well and works effectively alongside colleagues. Getting this right often involves taking preparatory steps before the young person arrives in the organisation.

Depending on the diversity of existing teams, in some cases it may be necessary to provide colleagues with guidance around what might be expected in terms of the work-readiness of the young person. This includes providing advice on what
tasks the young person should be able to do immediately, as well as discussing the appropriate support and attitudes from colleagues that will be beneficial in helping the new starter settle in and develop. For Barclays, this was an important step in the implementation process of their Apprenticeship programme, since many colleagues there had no previous experience of working with apprentices in the organisation:

‘We spent quite a bit of time managing colleagues’ expectations around the skills level of the apprentices coming in compared with graduate new starters, for example. We wanted to be clear about what the young people would be like, so there are no surprises.’

Lesley Clarke, Operational Lead (Technical Apprenticeship Programme) Barclays

Some managers we’ve spoken to have told us that they’ve found some members of their teams can be concerned about the impact that the arrival of an inexperienced worker might have on the performance of the team. In some cases, they might also hold stereotypical views about young people more generally. Where this is the case, good communication and providing information in advance is important. It can be effective to simply ask colleagues to reflect on the fact that we all had to start out in our own working lives and that we have all at some stage benefited from supportive, more experienced colleagues. It can also be helpful to explain to the team the importance to the organisation as a whole of taking on and developing young people.

For example, one of the many benefits of employing a young person is that, although they may require more time to get up to speed, they also often won’t have ingrained work habits and preconceptions about work. This can make them more inclined to take on and embrace the culture of the organisation and to make a fresh and positive contribution to their team if given the opportunity to do so. Communicating this to teams in advance means that colleagues can know what to expect, anticipate the impact the young person’s arrival may have on their work, and also prepare to be welcoming, encouraging and positive ahead of the new starter’s arrival.

Such approaches work as much in very small organisations as they do in large ones. Sophie Holloway, co-founder of Holloway Smith Noir, who create luxury bespoke lingerie, found this to be a successful approach when the business took on their first young apprentice:

‘It can be an immediate challenge being labelled an “apprentice” as attitudes from colleagues can be shaped by their not being sure what they’ll have to offer the team. … So we produced a Q&A factsheet to address potential stereotypical views about young people, and also to bust some myths about apprentices. This way, we were able to provide information about Apprenticeships and their real value to both the young people and the organisation.’

Sophie Holloway, Co-founder, Holloway Smith Noir

For Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, who employ just under 7,000 employees – around 80 of whom are apprentices – the importance of tackling expectations and assumptions amongst colleagues early on was also recognised as a priority, for which they found an effective solution.

‘It probably would have had higher expectations of a more experienced and skilled employee. However, with our apprentice I allow mistakes which I wouldn’t have accepted otherwise. I had to recognise that they were learning as they went, and this has affected my approach.’

Sophie Holloway, Co-founder, Holloway Smith Noir

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Wendy Collins, Learning and Skills Development Manager, Gloucester Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Making sure a young person is comfortable with the basics of a job

Many young people will only have limited experience of work, and some may never have stepped into a workplace of any description. It is therefore important not to take for granted that they will know how to perform tasks that, for more experienced workers, would need no introduction. For some individuals, it might therefore be necessary to take some time to make sure they are comfortable with the ‘basics’ of a job, especially as those new to the workplace might lack the confidence to ask for help where it is needed. As Oliver Herrmann at Wolverhampton Homes explains:

‘When a young person starts, we place much more emphasis on explaining the basics – answering the telephone and responding to emails, for example. They might be really good at IT but it may not be functional for the office. It’s a completely new experience for them.’

Oliver Herrmann, Employability Coordinator, Wolverhampton Homes

In some cases, it can be effective for the young person to work closely with, or even briefly shadow, a more experienced member of their team to observe how they use the equipment and conduct themselves while performing everyday tasks:

‘One of our administrative apprentices was initially very reluctant to use the phone – either to call out or answer. Informal discussion revealed she was not used to speaking on the phone, as she almost always texted or emailed in her personal life. We resolved this by allowing her to shadow another administrative apprentice, which was arranged in a separate room away from the main reception desk, which really succeeded in building her confidence.’

Jayne Coulson, Practice Manager, Saxmundham Health

Providing regular opportunities to discuss everyday issues

As a line manager, conducting regular meetings or catch-ups with young members of a team supports their longer-term development, assists their integration into the team, and also provides an opportunity for the line manager to hear about and address any personal concerns they might have. For Chris Wright, Education Producer at Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, informal meetings of this kind are invaluable in supporting an inexperienced young person in the workplace:

‘Each of our apprentices has a line manager in their particular department who sits down with them for a catch-up meeting each week, just for half an hour or so. The manager will try to focus on helping the young person adjust to things that could be taken for granted with more experienced workers, such as managing their workload, meeting targets, getting along with colleagues. We encourage them to tell us if they’re happy in their role and to let us know of any concerns they have. The idea is to provide motivation and generally to check that they’re okay.’

Chris Wright, Royal Exchange Theatre

Establishing and communicating objectives early

Setting objectives in the first few weeks after the young person arrives can help them to understand the organisation’s and line manager’s expectations, and support them in making connections between their everyday tasks and responsibilities and those of the wider team. Objectives can also help a young person to successfully complete tasks and contribute to the organisation’s overall business objectives. Without clear objectives, an inexperienced young person might struggle to see what they need to deliver, and why.

At Liberty Specialty Markets, one of the largest insurers in the Lloyds insurance market based in the City, they believe setting understandable objectives early on gives the young person a clear goal to work towards, which helps focus the young person’s attention while they find their feet:

‘Younger workers need clearer objectives to work towards so they understand the path they’re on.’

Samantha Ridgewell, HR Adviser, Liberty Specialty Markets

When setting objectives in these early stages, the following considerations are key:

- an awareness of where the young person is starting from in terms of skills and experience
- setting realistic and achievable targets
- helping the young person reflect on the skills that they are acquiring and developing.

‘Setting objectives is an important initial stage when it comes to line-managing young people, but unlike more experienced workers, we spend more time examining and discussing the practical steps they took to achieve their objectives – so if it’s project work, we examine each phase so they can see what they have learned and achieved, and how. We review this on a monthly basis and meet each week to talk them through activities they’ve undertaken and draw out the skills they’ve acquired in preparation for that meeting.’

Peter Atherton, Change Delivery Consultant, Santander

Building the trust of young employees

‘I want a supervisor who’s around to support me. When you’re on rotation, trying different bits of the business, it can be really helpful to keep the same manager so you’ve always got a base to come back to for advice you trust.’

Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

While regular meetings can be used to provide ‘a sympathetic ear’ (Russell, Head of Creative Sky Movies, Sky), building a trusting relationship more generally will mean that any issues which may arise can be discussed and resolved more carefully and expeditiously.

For some young people, the transition into the workplace can be more challenging than others, and management style may need to be adapted accordingly. For example, David Barlow, Managing Director of Barlows UK Ltd – a family-run, specialist electrical contractor who recently received an award from the
Every business has a responsibility to ensure that it follows the relevant rules and regulations and it is important to make sure that you know the rights of young people in your organisation, and what you should be doing as a minimum with regard to, for example, pay, working hours, time off and health and safety.

THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR ORGANISATION

An individual’s statutory employment rights and their employer’s statutory obligations will depend on the ‘employment status’ of that individual, that is, whether they qualify as an employee or a worker. Young people can be taken on by an organisation in a number of different ways and so it is important for an employer to understand the employment status and rights that will apply in each case.

‘Employee’ and ‘worker’ have technical, legal meanings in employment law but, in general, it may be said that a young person will usually be an employee if they are employed under a standard form of employment contract – for example, with regular hours and duties that they are expected to do every week. Those on other forms of contract – for example, more ‘casual’ work or those on ‘zero-hours contracts’ where there is no guarantee of hours and no obligation to accept hours that are offered – will usually be workers. Those who are genuinely engaging with an organisation as volunteers are not employed and therefore do not have the same rights as either employees or workers.

For more information about the entitlements of employees and workers, and on the employment status and specific entitlements of apprentices, those undertaking work experience placements, young people on Traineeships, interns, agency workers and volunteers, visit: www.acas.org.uk or www.gov.uk

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS WHICH VARY WITH AGE

What to pay
All workers and employees must be paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The NMW rate per hour depends on an individual’s age and there are particular rates for those aged 16–17, 18–20 and 21 and over. There is also a rate for apprentices, who must be paid for their normal working hours and the training that is part of the Apprenticeship (usually one day per week). The NMW rates are usually revised in October each year – the current rates and an NMW calculator can be found at www.acas.org.uk/nmw

What are the regulations on working time?
There are statutory rules that regulate the hours that most workers and employees can work. These rules provide a minimum entitlement to 5.6 weeks’ paid holidays per year for all workers and employees as well as setting limits on an average working week, providing for daily and weekly rest periods, and setting limits on the normal hours of night work. These regulations are different for young workers aged 16–17 than for those aged 18 and over. More detail can be found at www.acas.org.uk or www.gov.uk

HEALTH AND SAFETY

When employing young people, whether for work or work experience, employers have responsibilities for their health, safety and welfare, just as they do for other employees. However, there can be particular considerations and responsibilities where young people are concerned, especially when they are new to the world of work. Employers should consider making arrangements to manage issues such as the layout of the workplace, how the work and processes are organised, how the young person will handle work equipment, and the extent of health and safety training needed by each young individual, especially in higher-risk workplaces. Further information on the health and safety aspects of employing young people under age 18, including those on work experience placements, can be found on the Health and Safety Executive’s website at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/index.htm

For more information and guidance regarding the above, please contact the Acas Helpline (08457 47 47 47) or website (www.acas.org.uk)
Trade unions have a key role to play in supporting young people in the workplace, helping the new employee make the transition into the world of work and ensuring they are paid and treated fairly.

Union representatives can be ideal mentors for new young workers. Representatives often have training and experience of mentoring-type skills through their union role. For example, many will already have experience of the following skills:

- active listening
- building rapport
- offering constructive feedback
- offering information, advice and guidance
- offering information about workplace rights and responsibilities
- acting as a role model.

Additionally, trade unions and their union learning representatives have a great deal of experience developing high-quality learning and development programmes that lead to progression and secure employment. By working with employers and training providers to improve the quality of learning opportunities that young people receive, trade unions can demonstrate their positive impact in society as well as engaging directly with young people.

In terms of Apprenticeships, unions will help ensure that an Apprenticeship is high quality and that the apprentice is properly supported. Unions will negotiate with employers, making sure that time off is allowed to study or train, and that apprentices receive impartial information, advice and guidance, and are supported by a mentor.

Employers must give a young employee the chance to join an appropriate union. To find out more about which union to join go to www.worksmart.org.uk. Some unions now have specific youth and Apprenticeship rates – many also have structures within the union to support young workers within their workplace.

‘It’s vital for young people to have independent advice and good mentoring in a new career; trade union representatives are well equipped to offer this additional support.’

Gemma Clark, Learning and Development Project Officer, Mansfield District Council

‘Unionlearn and the unions have provided key support to our apprentices around pastoral care, health and safety and transitioning into the workplace. These efforts have helped ensure the success of our programme, which is fundamental to our business.’

Christopher Fairs, Human Resources Manager, Caterpillar Peterlee
PROVIDING STRUCTURE AND GOOD COMMUNICATION

“Young people need clear structure to help them with the early transition into work.”
Yvonne Calland, People Strategy and Development Manager, Santander

For many young people, starting jobs in the early stages of their working lives can mean adopting brand new behaviours and techniques, which at first may not come naturally. In helping to make these transitions as smooth and successful as possible, for both the young person and their employer, the young person’s relationship with their line manager is key to providing support and structure. As a line manager responsible for young talent, providing the right support to a young person as they acclimatise to the workplace and their new tasks, and guiding them through the challenges and issues they can face, is vitally important. Although challenging, this role can also be very rewarding and enjoyable when done in the right way, as the young person goes on to develop and flourish in the team and organisation.

In this section, we share the advice we’ve heard from employers on how they manage young employees in their organisations and the processes and techniques they’ve introduced to help them successfully develop the talents and skills of tomorrow, including:

- managing time and approaching projects
- expectations-setting, conduct and behaviour
- managing young people in age-diverse teams
- maintaining a good standard of communication
- pastoral support for young people.

MANAGING TIME AND APPROACHING PROJECTS

“It’s a huge leap from the classroom to work. You’re so used to sitting in a classroom then suddenly you’re expected to take responsibility and look after your own work. It’s a shock.”
Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

For a young person in the early stages of their working life, the fact that they are less experienced in a working environment means that they may not be as readily able as more experienced workers to grasp the structure of the working day and to understand, without supportive instruction, what they should be doing and when. Kim Savill, Administration Manager at Veolia, has an innovative solution she uses to help her Business Administration apprentices plan their time and approach their to-do lists:

“It sounds obvious, but help them to build in structure. When our apprentices first arrive, line managers prioritise showing them the techniques to structure their day. If they find it useful, we help them create a timetable of what tasks need to be done and any deadlines they need to meet. So we’ll say, ‘Between 09:00 and 10:00, you could sort through emails. By 10:00–11:00 you might wish to address your filing.’ We offer this task timetabling support for the first few weeks, or until they feel they’re ready to start structuring their own days.’
Kim Savill, Administration Manager, Veolia

Carl Green, Mail Order Operations Manager at Harrod UK Ltd, who manufactured sports equipment and nets used in the London 2012 Olympic Games, deploys a similar technique to help their young apprentices tackle larger, more complicated projects – an approach that he finds can also bring benefits to the more experienced members of the team:

“We make sure we break the apprentices’ work down into manageable, achievable tasks. For us, the task is still done, but it’s broken up so our younger workers can tackle it in stages. It makes it different and more interesting for them, but it also helps them see how to approach long project work.”
Carl Green, Mail Order Operations Manager, Harrod UK Ltd

EXPECTATIONS-SETTING, CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

“With me he’s firm, which is good for me as I need it, but he treats others differently depending on what they need and how they behave. We’re all seen as different.”
Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

As with any new employee, it’s important to be clear about expectations regarding appropriate workplace conduct and behaviour. This can be particularly important for young workers who may have little previous experience of adjusting to the rules and cultures of a workplace, and who may also find it more difficult than experienced workers to understand immediately the importance of observing certain workplace rules. For mentor and manager Kim Savill at Veolia, it’s therefore important to ‘be clear on the boundaries and consequences from the outset’.

At Rolls-Royce, they address this by encouraging their young apprentices, some of whom are under the age of 16, to be self-sufficient and accountable for their actions from the beginning of their training. This approach has helped their young employees to settle into working life more quickly, understand their responsibilities to their employer and the wider team, and ‘feel empowered’ as individuals. As Neil Fowkes, Learning and Development Manager, responsible for overseeing Rolls-Royce’s Apprenticeship programme, says:

“We take on apprentices as young as 14, so of course we’re aware that some young people can leave school and take a while to adapt to the working world. However, we try to be hands-off and encourage them to be self-sufficient. So if they aren’t for whatever reason meeting expectations or fulfilling certain behaviours, they understand that they’re accountable for their own actions and must stand on their own two feet.”
Neil Fowkes, Learning and Development Manager, Rolls-Royce
It is also important to bear in mind that, for many young people, there may be occasions when they find themselves at risk of contravening appropriate workplace conduct or behaviour through inexperience. An informal discussion, to make the young person aware of the reasons for rules and the consequences of breaking them, can therefore be an effective way of dealing with such issues. For example at Syngenta, they’ve successfully tackled issues with lateness by taking the time to explain the impact that poor time-keeping can have on team members:

‘We make it clear that if someone doesn’t turn up for their shift during the day, it means the individual coming off the night shift can’t go home. We point out the effect their decision has on others, and this tends to improve their behaviour.’

Nigel Wright, Learning and Development Adviser, Syngenta

In other situations, for example in higher-risk workplaces, it can be important to explain certain rules and the reasons for them right from the start. As Oliver Cave, Director of Connect Scaffolding, explains:

‘Everyone involved in our line of work has to take a lot of responsibility from the outset, especially in terms of the health and safety rules that need to be followed. We find this can come as a surprise to many young people, who might not have expected to have to follow so many rules so strictly and from day one.’

Oliver Cave, Director, Connect Scaffolding

In every workplace there will also be ‘unwritten rules’ – issues not covered explicitly in the contracts or employment handbook, but which are still important for employees to observe in the workplace. These might include acceptable standards around issues such as dress code, appropriate language and other workplace behaviours. Due to lack of experience, picking up on these rules and their importance can sometimes be more difficult for younger workers, and it can therefore be worthwhile taking the time to explain these issues to them at the outset.

The use of mobile phones in the workplace is a common example of this type of issue, highlighted by many of the employers and managers we’ve spoken with. Again, an informal and understanding approach is the best way to tackle such issues in the first instance. As Lesley Clarke, who has looked after around 170 apprentices who’ve joined Barclays Technical Apprenticeship in the last two years, told us:

‘We’ve encountered some general misunderstandings around Generation Y’s working style. Mainly around wearing headphones when they work, or drinking energy drinks at their desks, or “caffeine delivery”, which some older colleagues found unusual and interpreted as showing too relaxed an attitude. Making the young person aware of how their behaviour is read by older colleagues – but also being clear with older workers that, for example, the young worker’s consumption of an energy drink is just like, say, their drinking coffee, and doesn’t demonstrate a lack of respect or productivity, is how we solve it. Ask for views and start a conversation.’

James Lawrence, Apprenticeship Programme Manager at Visa, found this to be the case when they introduced apprentices into the organisation, and found that open discussion aimed at improving mutual awareness and understanding was an effective way to resolve such issues:

‘Fifty per cent of our workforce is Gen Y, doubling over the last three years. Our Generational Difference Seminars are open to all and include information on social changes and work expectations for that particular group, to help educate the workforce and foster a greater understanding. It’s done with good humour, and because no particular generation is singled out, people have been receptive.’

Samantha Ridgewell, HR Adviser, Liberty Specialty Markets

However, although misunderstandings can arise in age-diverse teams, for the most part working with an older or younger colleague brings numerous benefits to both parties and the business. In particular, younger workers’ fresh ideas can be a source of inspiration if these are tapped into by a business:

‘We’ve noticed a really effective ideas-exchange happening between older and younger workers. We’ve been approached by different areas of the business, particularly by colleagues who work in innovation, asking to meet the apprentices and gain insight and feedback; they’re almost like consultants!’

Scott Russell, Head of Creative Movies, Sky

Overall, when managing age-diverse teams, communication and highlighting the benefits of the interaction is key to success:

‘Age differences don’t interfere with the working environment. They enrich it!’

Nigel Wright, Learning and Development Adviser, Syngenta
PASTORAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

‘It’s about the individual. It’s about tailoring support and management to the young person. Not just seeing us as a cohort. Guidance will get you so far, but you need to take time to figure people out – older or younger.’

Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

Line managers tell us that their younger workers sometimes need a greater degree of understanding and support when it comes to dealing with personal problems. Providing this level of support can be a rewarding experience, as Yvonne Calland, People Strategy and Development Manager at Santander, explains:

‘Young people often need help managing their personal lives in the early days. Sometimes you feel like a counsellor and a mum all at the same time. I’ve made a lot of cups of tea!’

Yvonne Calland, People Strategy and Development Manager, Santander

For some young people, it may take them a while to learn how to prevent particular personal issues affecting their working lives – an issue Barlows UK Ltd has encountered with their apprentices:

‘Relationships are very important to young people, and if something goes wrong in their private life it can really impact upon their work.’

David Barlow, Managing Director, Barlows UK Ltd

Line managers can therefore play an important role in providing some ‘pastoral support’ when a young person comes to them with a problem. Most managers who’ve shared their experiences have found that all that is usually required in this regard is providing an appropriate opportunity to talk and signposting to other available resources if necessary.

‘A lot of youngsters talk to us about their problems, and I’m pleased they’re able to tell me about the issues they’re having. We support them, and try to keep them on track by chatting through the problem and focusing them.’

David Barlow, Managing Director, Barlows UK Ltd

‘An over-reliance on a mobile phone in the working environment is a problem we’ve experienced more recently. Young people are much more attuned to technology and used to being able to keep up with what their friends are doing 24/7. If this begins to happen in work, we point out how their mobile phone use is perceived by others and remind them, in a friendly and supportive way, that it’s not acceptable here. It’s a teething problem really.’

Lesley Clarke, Operational Lead (Technical Apprenticeship Programme), Barclays

Issues around unacceptable interpersonal conduct and behaviour can often similarly be solved informally through discussion and encouraging reflection on the effect that the behaviour is having on colleagues and the wider working environment. Family-run business, Barlows UK Ltd, explains how they find this to be a simple and effective approach when having to deal with unprofessional conduct or behaviour amongst their young apprentices:

‘Usually any issues are very easily solved by getting each party involved to tell the other how their behaviour affected them – they’re often surprised at how they made the other person feel.’

David Barlow, Managing Director, Barlows UK Ltd

MAINTAINING A GOOD STANDARD OF COMMUNICATION

Establishing and maintaining a good standard of communication between a line manager and their young employee can take time and investment but will reward the effort that is put in to doing so. For example, a young person who is still relatively new to the world of work may not know initially when it’s appropriate to share their concerns or feedback and so might need to be encouraged to do so. Scheduling regular opportunities to meet and discuss day-to-day issues can be an effective way of conveying to a young person that voicing their ideas and concerns is important and will be welcomed. This can also be a way of demonstrating to them that they have your time and attention, which can be important in providing reassurance, building confidence and fostering a positive, trusting attitude towards the organisation:

‘Young people need time from their line manager. Ring-fenced time where they can discuss their progress and really feel invested in. And this should be face-to-face – that’s important.’

Lesley Clarke, Operational Lead (Technical Apprenticeship Programme), Barclays

As Bendy Ashfield, Apprenticeship Manager at Royal Opera House, told us, it was during a catch-up like this that a young person there disclosed information about themselves which allowed their line manager to make appropriate adjustments to their work, thereby improving their personal and professional development:

‘One of Royal Opera House’s first apprentices appeared to be struggling with much of the learning. It transpired at one of our regular chats that he had dyslexia. Learning from that experience we make sure we provide opportunities for our young employees to be open and honest about their difficulties … so we’re able to provide them with the appropriate support.’

Bendy Ashfield, Apprenticeship Manager, Royal Opera House
However, good communication isn’t only essential to a young person’s relationship with their line manager. Ensuring the whole team communicates effectively with any young team members is also important, particularly in industries which require a greater degree of teamwork and trust.

Oliver Cave, Director of Connect Scaffolding, has found that organising social activities can be an effective way to improve communication between his team members:

‘Social activities, such as go-karting and charity parachute jumps, have proved very successful in mixing the younger workers in with the older ones. They provided the younger workers with a chance to “reverse the roles” for a day, to come out on top, and they always succeed in developing relationships between the younger and older workers. It makes the young people feel part of something!’

Oliver Cave, Director, Connect Scaffolding

In some industries, particularly heavy environments, having confidence in another colleague can be a more serious matter than in others, emphasising the need to build good communication as quickly as possible between young workers and the rest of the team. As this apprentice explains:

‘In the automotive industry, getting your job right can mean the difference between the life and death of a colleague. You have to look to your colleagues and trust they’re being the best they can be – and they expect the same of you. You learn quickly.’

Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

Finally, it shouldn’t be overlooked that taking the appropriate steps to successfully create this trust and communication can lead to improvements in your own skills and development as a line manager, as Sophie Holloway, co-founder of Holloway Smith Noir, discovered when they hired their first apprentice in 2013:

‘We view our relationship with our apprentice as two-way: we teach her skills, such as techniques for hand-embellishment of the costumes, and she teaches us about our own teaching style. I’ve learned a lot – it’s not just about the apprentice absorbing information.’

Sophie Holloway, Co-founder, Holloway Smith Noir
DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING A YOUNG PERSON

The support and development needs of a younger worker can differ from those of a more experienced worker. When it comes to thinking through what young workers need to help them develop and progress, employers have told us that placing a greater emphasis on providing personalised and accessible support at a range of levels can be very effective – not only in helping young workers tackle everyday challenges, but also in helping them understand the skills they’re acquiring and the direction in which they’re going (and wish to go):

‘We’re passionate about developing young people. We want to support our younger employees to think about their next steps and what they need to do to get there. It can be hard to have development conversations with a 16- or 17-year-old, because they don’t know what they want to do, but we provide many sources of support to help this journey.’

Patricia Hamilton, Area Coach – Scotland and North East, KFC

There are many things you can do as a line manager to support the development of a new young starter in your workplace. Here are the top ten tips that employers have shared with us on the development of a new young starter in your workplace.

1 START GRADUALLY AND RECOGNISE TALENT AND PROGRESSION

Once a young employee has mastered the basics and gained in confidence, they will be ready to attempt new and more complicated tasks. However, Peter Atherton at Santander believes, when it comes to managing a young person, it’s important not to rush their development unnecessarily: ‘It’s important to start small then expand their responsibilities once they’ve proved they’re ready for new challenges.’

However, it can be equally important not to overly restrict young workers in their activities. Recognising talent as it emerges and providing appropriate opportunities for it to flourish is important not just to the development of the young person – it can also reap rewards for a business. It is often the case, as a line management relationship develops, that a young person begins to demonstrate a natural aptitude or particular skill of which they may not even have been aware. Observing and communicating with young workers to see what skills they may have can therefore open up new possibilities for working in ways that best match the young person’s skills with the needs of the business. At Manchester Digital Laboratory (MadLab), they find this is regularly the case with their young employees:

‘Young people often don’t have a lot of employment experience, and so don’t have a clear idea of the skills they have. When a young worker starts at MadLab, we try to assess these strengths over the first few weeks and give them projects and tasks accordingly – we have even agreed changes to the elements of a job role, if appropriate.’

Rachael Turner, Director, MadLab

2 REVISIT AND REVIEW OBJECTIVES ON A REGULAR BASIS

As was highlighted above when looking at inductions, objectives are particularly important to a young inexperienced worker as they can provide a clear goal to work towards and a tangible measurement of their success. Beyond the induction and the first

CASE STUDY: MADLAB

RECOGNISING WHEN TO TAKE OFF THE TRAINING WHEELS

It can be hard to know when to take a step back and encourage a younger employee to let their initiative take over. Rachael Turner is director of Manchester Digital Laboratory (MadLab), a Manchester-based enterprise providing space to support and encourage technical and creative innovation and collaborative projects. She shares her account of a time she trusted her instincts:

‘Earlier this year we took on a new recruit who had worked here as a volunteer for two months and had clear potential to do well. He had previously been unemployed for around nine months and had been unsuccessful at between 20 and 30 interviews. When he was given the job he was keen and energetic and immediately put his enthusiasm to good use by taking on tasks that weren’t even expected of him, for example promoting MadLab’s activities online and diligently updating details on the website. He also started contacting people under his own initiative to help organise events and doing the physical work that nobody else enjoys. On occasion he had to be “vetoed” in terms of what he wanted to do, or guided to do a task differently, but in those cases he listened well and learned fast. It has been really encouraging to watch him grasp the opportunity with both hands.

‘My advice to line managers is to not be too prescriptive if a young person demonstrates they’re ready and willing for new opportunities. If you give them space to be creative, those who have a high level of initiative will flourish. Some may not know what they want to do with that freedom – but you then see what support will be appropriate for that individual, which you can give them.’

Rachael Turner, Director, MadLab
Managing future talent learning to work today’s young people, tomorrow’s workforce

Chris Wright, Education Producer, Royal Exchange Theatre

any support or training needs they might require.’

This provides an opportunity for them to share experiences and

with the managers responsible for our apprentices and interns.

‘Young workers need clearer objectives to work towards so they

understand the path they’re on. Reviewing these objectives

regularly is an important process to these young people. We make

them understand it’s not just a form-filling exercise, but a way to
devote more quickly.’

Samantha Ridgewell, HR Adviser, Liberty Specialty Markets

In some cases, where there is already a process in place for such

conversations with more experienced employees, it may be helpful
to rethink the frequency of these conversations for younger

workers. The timeframe for reviews may need to be different in

order to accommodate young workers’ greater need for advice,
guidance and direction in the early stages of their working lives. As

Harrod UK Ltd told us:

‘In the end, we added more objectives meetings for our young

colleagues. Usually they’re every six months for older workers,

but for the workers in their teens or early twenties, they’re every

three. We did this to ensure our young people have a clear

understanding about what is expected of them and so that we can

certainty they’re on the right track.’

Kevin Wilson, Manufacturing Manager at Harrod UK Ltd

3 TAILOR SUPPORT TO SUIT THE SIZE AND SET-

up of the business

Supporting and developing a young person doesn’t need to

involve complex arrangements and processes – particularly if you’re

a micro business. Sophie Holloway co-founded Holloway Smith

Noir with her sister in November 2010 and they have adopted an

informal approach to developing their first apprentice, encouraging

her to find her own way of progressing and learning new skills:

‘Central to our approach to developing our apprentice is our

shared experiences and openness to learning. In one case, our

apprentice thought she could figure out a better technique

than the one I was teaching her. . . . Left to her own devices, the

apprentice did in fact come to the same conclusion about how to

do things as my way. . . . I could see the apprentice had lots of pride

in figuring it out herself to an extent.’

Sophie Holloway, Co-founder, Holloway Smith Noir

For larger organisations, providing support for the line managers

who have responsibility for younger workers is also an important

consideration:

‘We provide a lot of internal support to the managers, which has

worked very well. For example, we arrange regular group meetings

with the managers responsible for our apprentices and interns.

This provides an opportunity for them to share experiences and
give feedback on how things are going, and allows us to identify
any support or training needs they might require.’

Chris Wright, Education Producer, Royal Exchange Theatre

4 HELP THE YOUNG PERSON TO LINK

ACTIVITIES COMPLETED TO SKILLS

OBTAINED

It can sometimes be difficult for a relatively inexperienced worker
to make the association between how activities they’re involved

in at work are directly contributing to improvements in their

skills levels. This is important for both the organisation and the

young person, as not only do improvements in skill levels help
to contribute to the overall productivity of the business, but by

acquiring more skills the individual contributes to their overall

professional and personal development. At Santander, they
therefore make this a priority for their weekly catch-ups with

their young employees:

‘Once a week we talk through the tasks or projects they did that

week, help them to extract the skills they’ve learned and understand

how they translate into the workplace. Sometimes inexperienced

workers can really struggle to make this link, but when they do so

it really helps their development and sense of motivation.’

Peter Atherton, Change Delivery Consultant, Santander

5 GIVE A YOUNG PERSON A MENTOR

‘My mentor is fantastic. I can go to her about any worries I have

and she’ll help me explain them to my line manager.’

Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

Mentoring in the workplace describes a relationship in which

a more experienced colleague uses their greater knowledge

and understanding of the work or workplace to support the
development of a more junior or inexperienced member of

staff. Providing a young person with a mentor, can help them
to acclimatise to their new environment and assist their overall
development by providing more intensive, personalised advice

and support and sharing the mentor’s knowledge and experience

of the workplace.

‘Mentoring is key to the development of a young person,’

believes Kim Savill, who manages and mentors Veolia’s Business

Administration apprentices, who can start as young as 16.

However, mentoring can also act as an effective way of
developing the skills and experience of the existing staff who
agree to become mentors, as Michelle Hoey, who is responsible
for co-ordinating Accenture’s interns, explains:

‘Mentoring provides a great chance to help more junior members

of the organisation who aren’t quite experienced enough
to manage staff, but who need to hone and develop their
management skills.’

When identifying potential mentors for young people, it’s
important to:

• Encourage mentoring as an opportunity for those with an
enthusiasm and commitment to developing others.

• Look for a colleague who could benefit from the experience
in terms of their own personal development.

• Consider matching a young person with a mentor from
outside their department to provide the distance and
objectivity that can help build the trust that is essential to the mentoring relationship.

- Finally, take time to find the right mentor for a particular individual. Rapport and confidence are key to any successful mentoring relationship.

For Nadine Crowe at Accenture, when identifying individuals to mentor and supervise interns, she finds that it is important to emphasise the level of commitment they will need in order for the mentoring relationship to be a beneficial one:

‘We want colleagues to come forward to mentor our interns. However, we’re clear that it takes real dedication, so we advise that if they don’t have the capacity they shouldn’t take it on. We need people who are aware of how much time and commitment it takes. There’s a fine line between enthusiasm and being realistic about what you can do. Having said that, we also make it clear that, once you do it, you’ll want to do it again and again. You get the bug, because it’s such a rewarding experience.’

Nadine Crowe, Corporate Citizenship, Accenture

6 THINK ABOUT PROVIDING A BUDDY AND WIDER PEER SUPPORT

The nature of the day-to-day interactions between young inexperienced workers and their peers within the context of the workplace is an important factor in helping them settle in and develop, and there are a variety of ways in which line managers can help young people through enabling support from their peers.

A designated ‘buddy’ can help a new starter in an organisation to integrate more quickly and provide support if they encounter any issues which they may not feel comfortable sharing with their line manager or mentor. Many companies use a ‘buddy’ system, where an experienced worker is nominated to assist the new recruit in all the day-to-day questions that may arise. Buddies provide another layer of informal support, which can also be helpful in preventing young people from feeling isolated. At KFC, the buddy system works effectively for their younger employees:

‘Young recruits are assigned a key person to work alongside them and help them learn the ropes and feel at ease. They’re an important source of support in store.’

Patricia Hamilton, Area Coach – Scotland and North East, KFC

Where possible, arranging for a young person to have the support of someone of a similar age, who may have been recruited a year or two before, can help provide friendly advice from someone who’s ‘been there and done that’. It can also be less intimidating for the young person to seek advice from a peer of a similar age than to approach an older colleague to ask for support:

‘We provide all our first-year apprentices with the support of an apprentice in their second year. It’s a great source of friendly advice for a new starter.’

James Lawrence, Apprenticeship Programme Manager, Visa

Opportunities for wider peer-to-peer networking in the workplace can also provide a welcome ‘safety net’ that many young people will value when they arrive in your organisation, particularly where they might otherwise be surrounded only by senior colleagues in their day-to-day role. This can be beneficial in enabling communication between young peers who may be experiencing similar challenges, helping them to build supportive workplace relations through providing mutual advice, guidance and encouragement. Some employers have begun to use workplace social media systems as one way to achieve this, which can also open up new and innovative possibilities for employers and managers to communicate with their staff and tap into their ideas.

7 ENCOURAGE YOUNG EMPLOYEES TO IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS

‘My line manager is in HR, so I get sent to loads of training courses, activities and conferences. It’s really useful and helps my development.’

Apprentice from unionlearn’s ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

Providing the right training is essential for any job, but training needn’t be confined to only the core, essential skills required for a particular role. Providing opportunities for a young person to widen their interests and improve a variety of skills increases not only their knowledge base and confidence, but is an effective way of raising the skills profile of a team and future-proofing a business. Rachael Turner, Director of MadLab, explains that they also encourage their young workers to attend courses of personal interest from the courses that MadLab offers its customers – an approach that brings business benefits through promoting staff’s own personal development:

‘Our young recruits are always sent on training courses. … But our own openness to offering young workers opportunities to develop in ways that they might be able to use once they move on from MadLab has the effect of increasing their sense of commitment to the business while they’re with us.’

Rachael Turner, Director, MadLab

8 ENCOURAGING THEM OUTSIDE THEIR COMFORT ZONE CAN BRING REWARDS WHEN DONE APPROPRIATELY

For Peter Atherton, experienced in managing young people at Santander, it’s important to identify opportunities or projects which will stretch young people, to demonstrate to them their capacity for growth and potential:

‘Challenge them to leave their comfort zone occasionally. We had a young person join us who was very shy, but we assigned them to a project and partnered them with a colleague who we knew could help bring out the best in them, and over time their confidence really increased. They really came out of their shell and took a lead role in the project. They were a different person.’

Peter Atherton, Change Delivery Consultant, Santander

9 PROVIDE REGULAR FEEDBACK

For employees of all abilities and ages, feedback is crucial to personal and professional development; however, for a young person in the early stages of their careers, receiving regular, constructive feedback from their line manager is not only
essential to their development and long-term success, it is also in general very much welcomed:

‘I want to have regular face-to-face catch-ups with my manager where they tell me how I’m really getting on. Someone who challenges and motivates me if I’m struggling, but also gives me confidence and reassures me that I’m doing the right things.’

Apprentice from unionlearn's ‘voice of the apprentice’ network

Furthermore, employers have told us that young people generally not only welcome feedback, but also want it regularly. James Lawrence, Apprenticeship Programme Manager at Visa, explains how this discovery led him to rethink how he provides feedback to younger members of his team and the steps he took to address this:

‘[We’ve found that] young people prefer immediate feedback, and we’ve learned that if you leave a long gap between replying they quite often view this as negative – whereas this isn’t an issue for older workers – so we’ve done some work around this.’

James Lawrence, Apprenticeship Programme Manager, Visa

‘Give regular feedback and support. Don’t assume young people are encouraged by receiving no feedback because they may see it as a criticism rather than a positive sign. They want feedback, so take the time to sit with them.’

Lesley Clarke, Operational Lead (Technical Apprenticeship Programme), Barclays

10 ENCOURAGE UPWARDS COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Finally, People Strategy and Development Manager at Santander, Yvonne Calland, advises encouraging young employees to provide their own feedback to you in order to boost your own development as a line manager. This can not only provide insight into your own technique, style or areas for improvement, but can also serve as a means of building greater trust in the relationship with that young person, with positive results for their development and ultimately for the business:

‘Feedback is key. Make sure you give weekly feedback on how they’ve done that week, but also give them a chance to feed back to you. It’s key to their development and helps you to improve too.’

Yvonne Calland, People Strategy and Development Manager, Santander

OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

CIPD LEARNING TO WORK IS AN ACTION-FOCUSED PROGRAMME LED BY THE CIPD TO PROMOTE THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS IN REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

To find out more about the CIPD’s Learning to Work programme: cipd.co.uk/learningtowork

For more information on investing in young people: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/investing-young-people.aspx

For top tips for recruiting and selecting young talent: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/investing-young-people.aspx

For advice on how to set up high-quality internship placements: cipd.co.uk/hr-resources guides/internships-employers-guide.aspx

For guidance on taking on apprentices or offering an Apprenticeship programme: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/Apprenticeships-work.aspx

For top tips on improving diversity: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/social-mobility-top-tips-hr-professionals.aspx

For information on how young people can support staff development: cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/employers-young-people-social-action.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pr&utm_content=generic

CONTACT ACAS FOR FREE, IMPARTIAL AND CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE ON EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ISSUES

Acas is the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. We aim to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations.

Acas has produced a wide range of guides for employers and employees that are available for free download, as well as web content available online, covering the key legal questions and providing practical advice on the people and process challenges that employers and employees can face at work.

Acas also provides independent advice and high-quality training, and works with employers and employees to solve problems and improve performance. Whether you’re an employer or an employee you can:

• call the Acas Helpline on 08457 47 47 47
• ask a question using Acas Helpline Online at www.acas.org.uk/helplineonline
• visit the Acas website at www.acas.org.uk

Employers might also be interested in our more specialised services, including training, workplace projects, conciliation and mediation.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TUC, UNIONLEARN AND WORKSMART

www.tuc.org.uk

The TUC is the voice of Britain at work. With 54 affiliated unions representing 6 million working people from all walks of life, we campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad. We negotiate in Europe and at home to build links with political parties, business, local communities and wider society.

www.unionlearn.org.uk

unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the TUC.

www.worksmart.org.uk

Worksmart aims to help everyone at work – whether or not they are union members – get a good deal from their working life. The site contains information on your rights at work, a union finder and lots of other useful resources on workplace issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE EMPLOYERS THAT HAVE KINDLY SHARED WITH US THEIR PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

Patricia Hamilton (KFC), Peter Atherton and Yvonne Calland (Santander), James Lawrence (Visa), Neil Fowkes (Rolls-Royce), Scott Russell (Sky), Nigel Wright (Syngenta), Robert Allan (Apex Hotels), David Barlow (Barlow’s Electricals), Oliver Herrmann (Wolverhampton Homes), Kim Savill (Veolia), Oliver Cave and Vaughan Caiger (Connect Scaffolding), Samantha Ridgewell (Liberty Specialty Markets), Rachael Turner (MadLab), Jayne Coulson (Saxmundham Health), Bendy Ashfield (Royal Opera House), Lesley Clarke (Barclays), Chris Wright (Royal Exchange Theatre), Sophie Holloway (Holloway Smith Noir), Hazel Stimpson, David Barlow, Kevin Wilson, Paul Clarkson and Carl Green (Harrod UK Ltd), Nadine Crowe, Michelle Hoey, Zoe Colbert, Joanna Zelkha (Accenture) and Lucy Blandford, Wendy Collins, Michelle Bevan (Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

We would also like to thank apprentices who participated in a focus group hosted by unionlearn on 22 November 2013 and who shared their experiences and feedback around being managed.


This is a joint publication by Acas, the CIPD and unionlearn. Our thanks go to Gill Dix and David Taylor at Acas and Fred Grindod at unionlearn.

This guide was written by Annie Peate at the CIPD and David Taylor at Acas.
Learning to Work is an action-focused programme led by the CIPD to promote the role of employers in reducing youth unemployment. It falls within the CIPD charity objective to champion better work and working lives.

The overall aim of the Learning to Work programme is to promote the business case for investing in the future workforce and increase the number of opportunities available for young people to engage with the world of work. We encourage HR professionals and employers to recognise and champion their role as key players in tackling youth unemployment by taking part in and promoting youth volunteering schemes, offering a wider range of access routes into their organisations and making their recruitment and management practices youth-friendly. We also lobby policy-makers to ensure that the education system is doing enough to prepare people for the workplace and, via our HR volunteers, directly promote employability skills among young people.

cipd.co.uk/learningtowork