

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

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Supervising the safe learner

Success is no accident so get it right!



Accident Control

- How do you check that companies have satisfactory systems for investigating and reporting accidents and do they know they must also report accidents to you?
- How do you satisfy yourself that the reports you get are accurate and that the right steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence?
- How do you make sure companies are meeting their legal obligations for first aid?
- Are you meeting your legal obligations for first aid?
- At review meetings, do you ask learners about any accidents or near-misses in their area and do you follow these up with the company, if appropriate?

‘We all know where the accident book is and the accident room. Luckily it’s the least used room in the whole factory, but we all know what to do when accidents do happen. We don’t just rely on the supervisor. Everyone takes responsibility for doing things properly.’

Working Environment

You need to be familiar with your learners’ work areas. There should be evidence of good housekeeping, appropriate machinery guards, noise, dust and fume control, chemical safety and equipment which is fit for its purpose. Where it hasn’t been possible to control risks at source, personal protective equipment should be supplied and learners must be clear about how it is tested, used and stored. Learners will copy other workers, so you need to check whether everyone appears to follow safe practices.

- Before placing a learner with a company, do you visit the learner’s proposed working area or a typical site to check there is a well-supervised safe and healthy environment?
- At subsequent visits to the workplace, do you get learners to show you their current working area to check these arrangements again?
- Do you promote the philosophy that getting workplace health and safety right is integral to the smooth and efficient running of a business, that it should be part of its overall quality assurance framework?

‘We always wear protective clothing for jobs. Our supervisor told us about someone, who didn’t use the guard on their machine. They were injured and so was their friend – that’s not going to happen to me.’

Training and Teamwork

‘We always try to tailor the training experience and make it fun. Our learners don’t want a classroom experience with a teacher talking at them – most didn’t get along with that in the first place. We want to empower them and ensure they get the most from the training and development activity.’

- Do you promote the value of training supervisors so that they know how to make the learning process informative, interactive and enjoyable?
- Do you stress the business advantages of teamwork – how it gets the best out of the whole workforce?

‘We have team meetings every week and everyone is asked for their opinions and ideas. I’ve suggested a couple of things and my supervisor has increased my level of responsibility so we can incorporate them. I really feel part of the team and an extra sense of pride in what I’m doing. Sharing ideas at meetings is a great way to learn.’

PROVIDERS – ARE YOU PROMOTING SAFE LEARNING?

Start by Getting the Right Learner...

- During initial assessment, when a learner is not already employed by a company, how do you find out what sort of placement the learner thinks would be right for them?
- How do you encourage the company to work out what skills, aptitudes and personal characteristics it would ideally look for in a learner?
- Don't forget it is important to identify medical conditions and any learning difficulties

‘We got together with the provider and hammered out what we were looking for and why. It makes the whole process more ‘scientific’ and has enabled us to move away from using ‘gut feeling’.’

Style of Supervision

Mutual respect between supervisor and learner is essential for effective supervision.

- How do you check learners will be supervised by someone who understands that inexperienced learners may lack awareness of risk?
 - Do you stress the business benefits of training supervisors in mentoring skills and health and safety? If not, do you train them?
 - Do you check supervisors have the time to carry out these duties?

Risk Assessment

Assessment of risk is vital to effective health and safety management. It must take account of the people as well as the physical hazard. A supervisor must consider a learner's skills and physique when judging the level of supervision needed at any stage in the learning process. Learners will be unfamiliar with the hazards of the working environment and may be eager to impress. Do you:

- seek to place learners in companies where risks are identified and eliminated or controlled and do you check at review meetings that this is remaining an integral part of training and supervision?
- check that supervisors understand that they must consider the person as well as the task when assessing risk?
- promote the business benefits of training supervisors in risk management and loss control?

‘We wrote a whole series of risk assessments and procedures about workplace safety, handling, work site rules and so on. It was clear these were our procedures, fit for our purposes. The staff see the procedures as something they can relate to. They are about them and the way they work – so they want to use them.’

...And get them into the Right Job

- How do you make sure learners understand their job description and duties when they start and at reviews?
- Do you make sure they know from whom they should and shouldn't take instructions and that they must never undertake any task until they have been trained to do it safely?

‘We sit them down before they start and let them know exactly what we expect from them and they can expect from us. We run a tight ship here and have learnt that giving learners a run down of their role and responsibilities when they start not only increases their motivation and confidence, it impacts on their performance and their inclination to show initiative. The result is we get along better and they develop faster.’

Individual Learning Plans

- Do you review learning plans with learners and employers to find ways of filling skill gaps?
- How do you make sure learners are being given tasks that develop their skills and keep them motivated?
- How do you check learners receive adequate health and safety information for each new area in which they work and each new task undertaken?

‘When I joined the company, I was encouraged to take charge of my learning plan. I discussed with my immediate supervisor what skills and experience I needed and I went to line managers of different departments and asked if I could work for short periods of time under their supervision. I really felt in control of where I was going and knew I would get all the experience and skills to get my NVQ.’

Induction and Behaviour

Providers have an important role to play in ensuring effective, comprehensive workplace induction takes place without delay and that essentials are repeated for new locations and tasks. See the key elements at the back of this leaflet.

- When vetting new placements, do you discuss with management the importance of a clear, systematic induction package that will settle in a new learner, getting them to understand the company and its culture?
- How do you check induction has included key health and safety elements appropriate to the organisation and work area and that the learner has understood the information?
- Do you talk to learners about workplace behaviour before they start and support the company in helping learners to achieve an appropriate work-focused manner?
- Do you stress to the company the importance of managers, supervisors and team members setting a good example and of rules being applied even-handedly to everyone?

‘From the start learners know what this company is all about. We spell out our core values to them and this reduces any ambiguities. We don't believe in being heavy-handed with our learners. Rules are spelled out at the start and supported by the behaviour of the other staff in the business.’

‘The site tour and introduction to the team and management really helped put a perspective on my role within the company. It really motivated me knowing what all the other departments did and how they all slotted together. It made my role seem all the more important. I was quite nervous when I started and didn't know what to expect. The whole induction really helped to put me at ease and settle in.’

Too many accidents! Between 1993 and 2000 more than 4,500 learners on government-funded work based learning provision were injured in accidents where insufficient or inappropriate supervision was a major contributory factor. That is more than half of all accidents to learners, where a cause has been clearly identified. All learners are at risk due to their incomplete knowledge and skill – and young people are particularly at risk due to their immaturity, inexperience and lack of awareness.

You can help. As a provider making arrangements for work based learning you have a pivotal role in helping employers with the supervision of learners. Learners need firm but fair supervision, but they also need to know the supervisor is a friendly mentor to whom they can turn when in doubt. Recent Department for Education and Skills (DfES) - funded research showed that supervision is at its best when health and safety is not seen as an 'optional extra'. Health and safety should be part of a company's quality assurance process, integrated into all aspects of the job and the whole team should see it as part of their responsibility.

Cut the bureaucracy. The DfES research showed that small firms can get it right without taking on large company procedures.

Because of their size, they have different but equally effective ways of doing things. The SME owner-manager is likely to have a much more 'hands-on' approach which may mean some formal systems are unnecessary.

Get the best match. Encourage the company to think about the sort of person and qualities they need. Use the information from your initial learner assessments to find the best match for company and learner.

Encourage change. It need not be extensive or expensive but could make a real difference to business performance. The right approach will not only reduce the likelihood of an unwanted accident, it can lead to a very real reduction in damage to buildings, plant, machinery, stock and finished goods. As accidents and costs go down, profits go up!

Use this leaflet to see whether your organisation is checking all the key elements of learner health and safety supervision. Are your vetting and monitoring techniques strong enough? Are your staff sufficiently trained in health and safety?

Health and Safety Induction – Key Elements

It is important for a learner to receive in-company health and safety induction. Vital matters should be covered immediately – before the learner is at risk. Other issues should be tackled within the first few weeks. Some items will need to be dealt with again when a learner moves to a new location or task. Check this happens. It's good practice to see a record of completed induction.

In any working environment induction should include the following:

- a tour of the premises and introduction to key staff;
- the company's legal responsibilities and duty of care;
- the learner's legal responsibilities to themselves and others;
- the company's health and safety policy, organisation and arrangements;
- supervision arrangements;
- significant risks and the control measures;
- prohibitions and health and safety rules;
- emergency and fire arrangements;
- first aid arrangements; and
- accident, ill health and other incident reporting and investigating.

You should also cover any of the following which are applicable to your operation:

- provision and use of personal protective equipment and clothing;
- safe use of equipment and machinery;
- protection from noise, dust, fumes and hazardous substances; and
- manual handling hazards and protective measures.

‘It is the supervisor who is on the spot and in a position to know whether or not safety arrangements are working in practice. His influence can be decisive. Both here and abroad, wherever we have seen outstanding safety and health arrangements it has been clear that a key role is played by well-trained supervisors who are held accountable for what happens within their sphere of control. We are not at all satisfied that this key role in safety is sufficiently recognised throughout industry generally, or that enough is done to equip supervisors for it.’

The Robens Report on Safety & Health at Work 1974

Guidance for Providers

Further Reading

This leaflet is based on research carried out on behalf of the DfES in 2000.
The quotations have been taken from interviews carried out as part of the research.

Additional information is available in two good practice guides,
which include case studies:

**Supervising Learners' Health and Safety:
A Good Practice Guide for Employers**

**Health and Safety Supervision of Learners in the Workplace:
A Good Practice Guide for Providers**

These are available from the LSC website
www.lscdata.gov.uk/healthandsafety/has_good_practice.html

Other useful publications are:

HSG65 'Successful health and safety management'

HSG165 'Young people at work: a guide for employers'

HSG199 'Managing health and safety on work experience'

These are available from HSE Books
www.hsebooks.co.uk/homepage.html

This information is provided by the LSC solely to promote and encourage good practice
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