

Youth-friendly line management

A condensed summary of CIPD's *Managing Future Talent* guide

This is a condensed version of CIPD's *Managing Future Talent* guide to youth-friendly line management, which was developed with insights from employers from a wide range of sizes and sectors. [You can read the full guide here.](#)

For a young person, the experience of entering the workplace and adjusting to working life 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 young employees settle in and continue to develop and progress can also pose different challenges to those they are used to with managing more experienced colleagues.

Step by step

1. Provide a comprehensive induction

Firstly, you should consider how best to support a young person when they first join your company by providing a comprehensive induction. For some tips about designing youth-friendly inductions, visit the [Getting Started](#) section of our Future Proof website.

2. Providing structure and good communication

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.

Managing time and approaching projects

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. You can support them by giving them tips on how to manage their time, for example by giving them a suggested timetable of how long to spend on different tasks each day.

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Expectations-setting, conduct and behaviour

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 the importance of observing certain workplace rules.

Managing young people in age-diverse teams

Managing an age-diverse team means being responsible for young workers who may have varying levels of experience, as well as workers in their fifties or sixties or older who have more experience of life and work. This can present some interesting challenges as the behavioural preferences and working practices of one generational group can sometimes be misinterpreted by another. Young people may not be aware of how older colleagues will interpret their behaviour, so you should explain to them how it could be perceived, rather than just telling them not to do something.

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.

Pastoral support for young people

Younger workers sometimes need a greater degree of understanding and support when it comes to dealing with personal problems. 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.

3. Developing and supporting a young person

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, when it comes to managing a young person, it's important not to rush their development unnecessarily. Recognising talent as it emerges and providing appropriate opportunities for it to flourish is important not just to the development of the young person.

Tailor support to suit the size and setup 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. For larger organisations, providing support for the line managers who have responsibility for younger workers is also an important consideration.

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.

Give a young person a mentor

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.

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.

Encourage young employees to identify and develop their skills

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. This can include encouraging young employees to take part in social action employee volunteering opportunities.

Encouraging them outside their comfort zone can bring rewards when done appropriately

It's important to identify opportunities or projects which will stretch young people, to demonstrate to them their capacity for growth and potential

Encourage upwards communication and feedback

Encourage 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.

Where to go next?

- Read the full *Managing Future Talent* report
- Attracting young talent is just one way to future proof your business. Use our [Youth Employment Assessment Tool](#) to find out what you're doing well and get some ideas on how to improve in other areas.