Induction

introducing learners to their programme

"Arrangements for the induction of learners to their programmes were usually satisfactory. Some providers expected learners to assimilate too much information in too short a period of time. Others did not give learners enough information about the demands of their programme."


What?

- know what to cover
- get the information together
- design the process
- follow it up
- evaluate and improve the process.

Why?

Starting a new learning programme is a bit of a step in the dark for most people, and for some it’s a big leap. Many learners, especially if they come straight from school, won’t have much experience of working and learning at the same time. They will have to get to grips with the new environment they are in, the expectations they and others have and the processes involved. Learners need to get:

- a full and accurate picture of what is expected of them
- a clear understanding of who’s involved and what their roles are.

One of the purposes of induction is to inform learners about these things. With a comprehensive induction, learners are more likely to progress quickly, finish the programme, complete their learning aims, and develop the relationships required to succeed at work and in their learning.

But it’s easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of information to take in. That’s why induction is best seen as a process, rather than a single event. It may take hours or even days, and it may spread over a period of several weeks. It’s also useful to revisit the information introduced at induction later on, to check and review learners’ understanding.

Induction to work-based learning is generally managed quite well, but there are some common pitfalls:

It’s important to see induction as an interactive process. Employers and providers want to give learners information, and learners need to take it in. The more active the process is, the more likely learners are to absorb and remember what’s important. Activities, tasks, group work, games and other ways of getting learners to participate should be built in to the induction process.

Key message

These are things that can make a big difference to the success of induction.

- The way the information is presented – is it easy to follow and presented in straightforward terms that learners can understand?
- The ease with which learners can link the information given to their new job and their new learning environment.
- Whether the information is linked together, so learners can make sense of it as a whole and not just in bits and pieces.
- Whether the information is of practical use to the learner and doesn’t just fulfil a requirement.
How?

**Know what to cover**

The checklist below lists topics generally covered during induction. Other topics may be included as well, but the ones in the list give a sound basis.

**Introduction to the programme**

- Introduce the learner to all the components of their programme.
- Explain how the components will be achieved and certificated.
- Discuss the outcomes of initial assessment and agree what support the learner will receive.
- Confirm what the learner has already achieved.
- Complete the start paperwork.

**Introduction to the learning**

- Introduce and discuss the individual learning plan.
- Introduce the trainers, assessors and/or tutors who will be working with the learner.
- Explain the arrangements for teaching and learning, including the timetable.
- Confirm where on- and off-the-job training will take place.
- Introduce and plan the review process.
- Discuss how to make best use of the time available to complete the learning.

**Introduction to the job**

- Discuss the job description and contract of employment, if issued, including holidays and sickness procedures.
- Explain the role of the learner’s supervisor and/or mentor.
- Discuss employment rights and responsibilities.
- Discuss trade union or association membership.
- Discuss what equipment will be needed to undertake the job.

**Introduction to the procedures**

- Introduce health and safety guidelines and checklists.
- Discuss equal opportunities and introduce policies and procedures.
- Discuss the disciplinary process.

**General**

- Start to develop good working relationships.
- Discuss who the learner can contact for help.
- Answer any questions at this stage.
- Ensure the learner knows who to contact with any further questions.
**Get the information together**

A lot of the information given at induction will be in written form. Many of the items in the list above have accompanying documents and forms. Some of them will need to be signed by learners or employers and copies distributed.

The way documents are presented is important. Will learners want to use them? Are they memorable? How will the information be stored? It’s often a good idea to gather the information in an induction pack or booklet and give it to learners.

**Design the process**

Four factors influence the design of induction:

- **Formality** – induction should be structured and may include formal activities such as assessment, but it’s important for learners to feel at ease and receptive. For this reason it’s best to avoid too much formality, which may put some people under pressure.

- **Length of time** – varies from half a day to several days, over a period of weeks. The important thing is to allow enough time to cover everything and give learners the best chance to absorb the information.

- **Content** – there’s a lot of information to include, and the danger is that induction becomes isolated from the rest of the programme. It’s essential to keep linking the content of induction to the rest of the learner’s programme.

- **Assessment** – formal assessment may be part of induction. This is likely to be the case when induction overlaps with initial assessment.

Typically an induction process might involve some or all of these kinds of activity:

- welcome and introduction activities
- focused input sessions, e.g. on health and safety, supported by videos and other resources
- group activities based on short tasks or longer assignments, supported by workbooks
- one-to-one discussions
- informal ‘tours’ of the workplace
- short periods of work shadowing
- assessment of progress, if the induction takes place over an extended period of time
- some initial training, e.g. in the basic routines or procedures at work

Group sessions make good use of time, but it’s important to check that individual learners have grasped the messages and can recall them. Some learners may be intimidated in groups and this might prevent them asking for clarification. A short individual session after a group session will give each learner a chance to get a better understanding of anything they are unclear about.

**Staff involved with induction should:**

- keep the information as clear as possible
- refer learners to the relevant documents
- make links between the information, so that learners can see how it all fits together.
Follow it up

Reviews can be used to check that learners still understand the information given during induction, and make use of it. If the induction process uses checklists, e.g. for health and safety or equal opportunities, these can be gone over again at review.

“...regular review and feedback, together with a clear link to training and development activities, are essential for the operation of an induction process...it is clear that young recruits in particular benefit from regular feedback in the early weeks and months of their employment.”

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

It may be worthwhile giving learners an ‘issues’ sheet that they can use to jot down queries or concerns they have between induction and the first review. With so much going on in the first few weeks, it’s easy to forget questions that come to mind.

If learners don’t have any questions, it may be because they have been given too much to think about or remember.

Evaluate and improve the process

However well designed induction is, there’s always room for improvement. Learners themselves are the best source of ideas. They can be asked to assess induction during and immediately after the process, to get feedback on things like:

- the amount of information given – about right, too much or too little?
- whether learners see a link between the information given and various aspects of their programme
- how well prepared they feel for starting work.

Learners can also give useful feedback on induction later on, when they are more familiar with the learning and working environment. At this stage, they should be able to comment on the accuracy and relevance of the information they were given at induction.

Changes to the content or process may help to ensure that information is presented in a way that helps learners to:

- understand and absorb the key messages
- question what they have learned, either at the time of the induction or during follow-up sessions.

Changes may also be made to ensure that all those involved with induction are aware of the whole process, so that their contribution supports what has been or will be presented at other stages. It’s also important to:

- make staff aware of any changes that affect the learner’s programme, such as new legislation or new requirements from the Learning and Skills Council or awarding bodies
- ensure that the documentation used in induction reflects these changes.
Employer induction

Young people starting work in one organisation are given an induction lasting a day and a half. One day involves finding out about the work of the particular department the new recruits work in, with a particular emphasis on health and safety and legal requirements. The other half day is an introduction to the job itself, and is carried out by the work supervisor.

Induction is linked to the training employees will receive. After the formal induction, new employees are enrolled on two half-day courses covering specific aspects of their work.

The training manager, who designed and monitors the induction process, is conscious of time pressures:

"More time would be good, but it’s hard to put the case to department managers. As it is, they get a good basis to start work. Ideally I’d like more chance to get to know the new recruits better during induction."

Resources

- Learning for Work (2000) Introducing key skills to trainees. (Key Skills Support Programme)

Stay in touch

- www.jrf.org.uk
- www.keyskillssupport.net

Checklist

In what sense is induction in your organisation a process, rather than a single one-off event?

If it is a process:

- How long does the process last?
- What are the main components of the process?
- How are learners actively involved in it?
- What does induction cover other than the items listed in the checklist on page 2?
- How is all the information used during induction gathered together?
- Is there a good balance between informality and a structured process?
- What kinds of activities are included in induction?
- When and how is induction followed up?
- What feedback is sought from learners about the induction process?
- How has the feedback been used?
Where and when?

Induction should take place at or near the start of the programme. It should include:

- an introduction to the learning programme.
- an introduction to the workplace and the job.

The process may be short and sharp – half a day is the bare minimum – or it may extend over a period of days or weeks. It is quite likely that various aspects of induction will happen at different times and places, to reduce the load of information given to the learner.

There’s no set order for the process. But it’s important that:

- induction takes place from the very start
- the information given is clear, comprehensive and the same for each learner
- the people involved communicate and make it clear to each other what has been covered, to avoid duplication
- learners are clearly signposted through the process, particularly if it takes place over time.

It’s generally better to give information a little at a time and often, and check that it has been understood. This can be done at the end of an induction session, by asking learners to give brief answers to appropriate questions. It can also be done at subsequent reviews. Learners can be asked what they remember about key points. If they don’t remember a specific aspect well, the employer or provider can:

- change this part of the induction process to make it more memorable
- organise refresher information for learners to help them remember.

Case studies and examples

A structured process

One employer involves all apprentices in a ten-day induction. Two of the days are spent in the workplace, the other eight days at the training centre. At the centre, apprentices take part in a structured set of activities including group work, role play and team-building activities. Some formal assessment is also done.

At work, apprentices are:

- introduced to their colleagues and other staff
- shown around the company
- told about the company’s policies and procedures
- introduced to health and safety procedures.

The process is designed to help new employees feel at home in their new environment and provide a thorough introduction to the workplace.