

## Guidance for intern managers and trainers

The workplace is a complex environment full of implicit and unspoken rules about behaviours, language and dress code.

Below is some guidance that you may find useful when a young person with autism is completing the placement.

### Guidelines for personal presentation

#### *Starting work*

You can use the following checklist to ensure you have provided all the relevant information

<b>What time to arrive at work</b>	
<b>What time to start working</b>	
<b>Where to sit/which desk to use</b>	
<b>What time are the morning and afternoon breaks</b>	
<b>What time is lunch</b>	
<b>Where can you make a cup of tea, coffee or other refreshment and have your lunch</b>	
<b>Where are the toilets</b>	
<b>What time can you start packing up for the day</b>	
<b>What time to leave work</b>	

#### *Dress code*

It is important to clearly define the dress code in your workplace. Below are some things to consider;

- Avoid phrases like 'smart casual'
- Say 'in this office we don't expect you to wear a full suit but you should wear a smart and clean pair of trousers, shoes and a shirt'
- Show the person a picture of the expected dress.
- Be clear and direct if someone isn't dressed appropriately and explain what they need to change

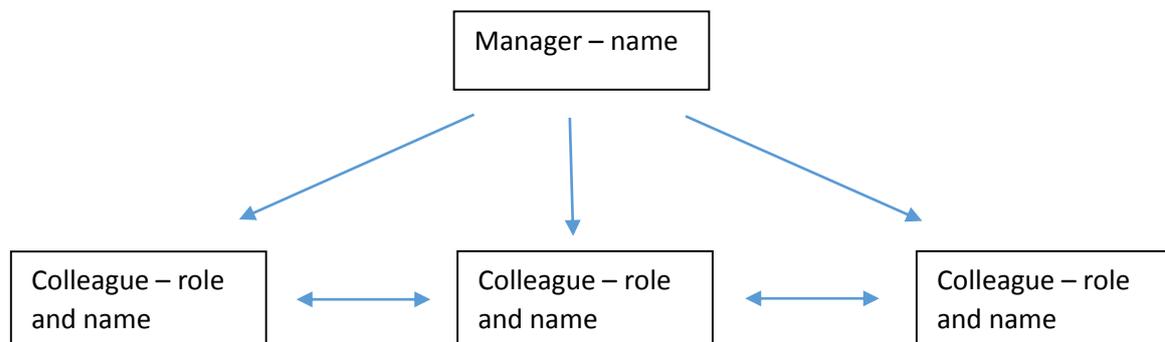
#### *Unwritten rules*

There are many unwritten rules in society and this is often reflected in the workplace. Unwritten rules can be loosely defined as a rule or behaviour which is expected of an individual that is never made explicit. It is important to clarify as many of the unwritten as possible on the first day. The following table has common unwritten rules that you may find useful;

When to make tea and coffee	What is the tea, coffee and milk rule	Are any other items in the fridge for everybody to use	If a team has cake to share the rule is you take one piece
When to offer to make colleagues a cup of tea	Internet for personal use	How often you can take a break	Conversations with colleagues in the office

### Team structure

It is useful to clarify the immediate team and responsibilities in the form of a diagram and clearly state each person's role and where they sit in the office.



## Managing sensory sensitivities

Many people with autism, including Asperger syndrome have a hypersensitivity (oversensitivity) to sensory inputs.

This can include;

- Light
- Sound
- Touch
- Taste
- Temperature

All of the above can have a significant impact on a person's daily activities, productivity and anxiety in the workplace. Here are some simple things to consider;

- **Desk position:** Where a person sits in an office can have an impact on a person's performance and anxiety levels. It is important to identify with your young person if they have any sensory sensitivities and plan the desk space accordingly. A person with autism, including Asperger syndrome should never be expected to hot desk.
- **Equipment:** Equipment can be used to manage sensory sensitivities, increasing performance and decreasing anxiety. For example, allowing a person to wear headphones, have desk dividers or computer screen covers.
- **Quiet space:** It is important that a quiet space in, or near the office is identified for the person with autism to use when they become anxious due to sensory sensitivities.

## Clarifying the role and expectations

It is important that as many aspects of the role are clarified.

You may want to use the following checklist to ensure you have provided all the relevant information;

<b>Is there a clear job description</b>	
<b>What are the specific daily targets</b>	
<b>What are the specific weekly targets</b>	
<b>Who to ask for help</b>	
<b>When are the weekly meetings scheduled</b>	
<b>When are team meetings scheduled</b>	

### *Giving instructions*

Unclear and indirect communication is often the main barrier for people with autism, including Asperger syndrome in the workplace. Here are some simple things to consider;

#### *Do*

- Use the employees preferred method of communication. For many people that may be via written communication such as email.
- Use language which is clear and direct and in both a written and verbal format.
- Use direct communication such as 'I need you to complete this task by 1pm. If you are not going to be able to complete this task by then then let me know'

#### *Do not*

- Rely on non-verbal gestures or hints to get a message across
- Use indirect communication as 'are you able to do this piece of work'
- Rely on verbal instructions alone – always follow up with written instructions in bullet point format

## Supporting documents and templates

People with autism, including Asperger syndrome can often have difficulty in one or more aspects of executive function. Executive function is a set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organising, strategising, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space. Here are some simple strategies to consider;

### *Scripts*

Scripts can be developed for the person with autism in most situations in the workplace. For example, when answering the phone, greeting customers or asking questions. The best way to do this is think of short phrases or sentences that the person can write down to use throughout the day in situations they are unsure about.

### ***Working file and visual reminders***

A working file could be developed which will help create independence. This should have details of;

- common tasks with clear procedures
- example screen shots could be used for any tasks that involve using the computer
- photographs/video clips of each stage of a task.

### ***Organisational strategies***

There are many organisational strategies that could be developed. Here are some simple things to consider;

- Outlook calendars
- Smartphones
- Watch alarms
- Colour coded timetables
- Clear to do lists with clear deadlines
- Guidance on how and when to move deadlines

### ***Timetable***

A timetable should be developed clearly outlining the following;

- Specific times to do check housekeeping duties
- Structured breaks and lunch
- Supervisor and management meetings
- Time to complete new tasks (see multitasking below)

### ***Assistive technology***

You may find that letting your work experience employee know about assistive technology useful. These are often cheap and simple ways to develop workplace strategies and create independence.

## **Building skills**

### ***Training***

All training should be practical and on a 1:1 basis and in an environment that is suitable and does not cause anxiety due to sensory sensitivities.

Support should include;

- Working through course materials on a one-to-one basis before the course takes place; this will allow the young person to attend the course, follow what is being said and to participate in the group work activities.
- Working through the course materials on a one-to-one basis after the course; this will allow the young person to review the materials and clarify any areas of uncertainty.

### **Learning new tasks**

When supporting your young person to learn a new task;

- Talk through the task in a quiet environment. Break the task down into stages and explain each stage. In addition, explain the purpose of the task and what the output will be used for to enable the young person to understand why each stage is necessary.
- Allow the young person to shadow or 'buddy-up' with an allocated person to initially observe their completion of the task and then to carry out each stage of the task with increasing independence.
- Offer the young person the opportunity to ask questions to build his knowledge and understanding of the processes and procedures involved. Materials such as checklists, flow charts and problem-solving 'prompt sheets' should be developed to help the young person to learn and remember any procedures involved and assist him in completing tasks independently.

## **Placement supervision**

It is important to structure in specific times each week to meet with your work experience employee.

To get the most out of these meetings here are some simple things to consider;

- **Frequency:** It would be beneficial for meetings to be scheduled for a set time and day each week.
- **Format for the meetings:** The meetings should follow a clear and consistent format. For example:
  - feedback from manager
  - feedback from employee
  - planning of timetable for next week
  - reporting any upcoming changes or events
- **Location of meetings:** Meetings should take place in a quiet environment, with low background noise levels and minimal opportunities for interruptions