



## Supervising the safe learner

Success is no accident so get it right!



## Accident Control

- Do you train staff in reporting and investigating accidents and ill health?
- Do you make sure action is taken to prevent similar accidents happening again?
- Are you sure your investigating and reporting systems meet your legal and contractual duties?
- Are you meeting your legal obligations for first aid?
- Do supervisors encourage a 'no blame' culture where people will report accidents and near misses without fear of reprisal?

‘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

Your risk assessments should have led to appropriate machinery guards, noise, dust and fume control, chemical safety and equipment which is fit for purpose. Where it hasn’t been possible to control risks at source, personal protective equipment must be supplied and learners must be clear about how it is tested, used and stored. Learners will copy other workers, so it’s vital everyone follows safe practices.

- Is 'getting health and safety right' integral to the efficient running of your business and does your company's quality assurance framework reflect this?
- Do your systems check that health and safety procedures and equipment remain operative and up to date?

‘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 your supervisors make the training process informative, interactive and enjoyable?
- Do you encourage them to be firm but friendly mentors?
- How do you promote teamwork in your company?

‘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.’

# SUPERVISING THE SAFE LEARNER

## The Right Learner

- Do you work out what skills, aptitude and personal characteristics you need in a post and discuss these with the provider? Do you look for these attributes when recruiting?
- Do you involve staff in the selection process, to get their views on whether a learner will fit in with your company's values and culture?
- Do you identify medical conditions or 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.

- Do your supervisors understand their legal responsibility for the health and safety of learners?
- Do they have mentoring skills and health and safety knowledge? If not, do you train them?
  - Do you make sure they 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 person as well as the physical hazard. A supervisor must consider a learner's skills, physical ability and maturity when judging the level of supervision needed at any stage in the learning process.

- How is risk recognition, assessment and control encouraged throughout your organisation?
- When a non-routine task arises is it always risk-assessed and managed?
- Do supervisors understand that they must consider the person as well as the task when assessing risk?

‘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.’

## The Right Job

- How do supervisors make sure that learners and all team members are aware of each others' roles and responsibilities and of each others' abilities and skills?
- Do your learners always know from whom they should and shouldn't take instructions and do they know they must never undertake any task until they have been trained to do it safely?
- Do supervisors understand that learners sometimes lack the confidence to ask questions, so it should never be assumed that they'll seek clarification?

‘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 make sure learning plans are regularly reviewed by the learners, supervisors and providers 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?
- As learners increase their knowledge and skill, they may work in different areas and require less immediate supervision. How do you make sure they're still safe?

‘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

‘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.’

- Have you made a list of all the things a new learner or employee needs to know when coming into your company (see back page of this leaflet) and do you keep records to show they've all been covered?
- How do you ensure vital issues are covered before a learner could be put at risk?
- Do supervisors make clear to learners the work area rules and are they told that horseplay will not be tolerated?
- Do managers, supervisors and team members act as role models?

‘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.’

# What's best for your learner will be best for you too

Your learners can be a real asset to your company.

With effective training they may go on to become valuable employees – the life-blood and future of your business. 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 need to protect them. Your supervisors need to keep learners safe and healthy while they're being trained to understand your business and their job. 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. You'll get a better organised workplace and less wastage.

There's no need for a lot of bureaucracy. Just treat health and safety as part of your quality control. Small and medium-sized companies can integrate health and safety into their quality assurance processes without taking on large company procedures. Because of their 'hands-on' approach, it is possible for the smaller company to have a less formal but equally effective way of doing things.

Strike a happy balance. 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. Take the time to get to know your learners, their strengths and their weaknesses. Give explanations rather than orders.

Use this leaflet to check whether you've considered all the key elements of getting your learner supervision right. Discuss any concerns with the training supplier or college. They'll be able to help you with any problem areas.

‘For every £1 you pay in insurance, an accident costs anything from £8 to £36 in unrecoverable costs’

Health and Safety  
Executive Research, 1996

## Health and Safety Induction – Key Elements

It is important for a learner to receive 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.

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;
- accident, ill health and other incident reporting and investigating; and
- manual handling hazards and protective measures.

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; and
- protection from noise, dust, fumes and hazardous substances.

‘The boss is approachable. He's always there for us and always makes time if we need him. He goes through our work with us and gets us to ask questions to make sure we completely understand what we're doing and why. I'm looking forward to being a full-time employee when I finish my apprenticeship.’

# Guidance for Employers

## 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  
[http://www.lscdata.gov.uk/healthandsafety/has\\_good\\_practice.html](http://www.lscdata.gov.uk/healthandsafety/has_good_practice.html)

Other useful publications are:

**Successful health and safety management HSG 65**

**Young people at work: a guide for employers HSG 165**

**Managing health and safety on work experience HSG 199**

These are available from HSE Books  
<http://www.hsebooks.co.uk/homepage.html>

For help with any aspect of learner supervision contact your provider:



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