

Supported Internship Case Study

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Summary

This case study demonstrates an Intern's journey from initial interview in January 2013 into fulfilling a business need in May 2013. It outlines the interviewing and occupational profiling, leading to a job match, coaching, using natural support, off-job training, fading support and independence in a catering role. The results show a marked increase in confidence and abilities, an expressed interest from the work base provider and the gathering of relevant information that will follow the Intern into future employment.

Introduction

The Supported Internship programme is a pilot for young people who are learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, whose goal is sustainable employment. The programme takes place at a host employer where the job role is modelled in respect of the intern and teaching and learning takes place alongside to acquire competitive work skills. The emphasis is on collaboration, driven by the partnerships, job coach and business. The objective is to obtain paid employment for the intern. The case study described here relates to a young person with autism.

What we wanted to achieve

- a) Build confidence in people and environment.
- b) Build confidence in own abilities.
- c) Work towards lessening support and building independence.
- d) Establish conduits for the "what ifs?", the unexpected and for negotiation.
- e) Train in Employability Skills.
- f) Meet the needs of job description.
- g) Establish an open and supportive communication system, with frequent opportunities for feedback on performance.
- h) Have ownership of "Learning Guidance" and "Ability Statement" for future use and for on-going development.
- i) Job outcome.

Implementation

Initial Interviews

This involved finding out about:

- Interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, aspirations.
- Learning, health and communication preferences and needs.
- Family/Carer support/others involved.
- Education and work experience.
- Qualities abilities and strengths.

It also included

- Reviewing job descriptions to match findings.
- Observing tasks and work environment.
- Establishing support needs and planning and agreeing next steps.

What we did

- Liaison with work provider about Intern's interests and abilities. Organised staff Induction regarding specific learning needs and the importance of clear communication with one job at a time, starting in their small kitchen and quieter work environment, on a 1-2-1 basis. Gave specific and generic information about autism on a need to know basis and to raise awareness, stressing the importance of consistency of information and supporting with change. Advised natural support about the clear use of language, the importance of practical demonstration, practicing without fear of making a mistake and checking understanding. (Work duties already experienced and natural support interested in being involved)
- Intern visits the employer with support worker and job coach to look at the place of work and meet key people involved in the work (informal interview)
- Discussed opportunities and negotiated elements of the job the Intern could be comfortable with at the start and how it could be progressed as confidence builds.
- Completed a communication form with names and telephone details.
- Explained and demonstrated a comfortable way for Intern to communicate concerns when anxious about how and when to communicate in the work place. (Intern to reveal a red badge on inside of uniform collar as a sign for assistance)
- Organised a set pattern of duties and times to do them, which included lunch breaks and some activities in less busy times at the host employer.
- Ordered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and established a start date. Agreed one day per week to start, leading to two days as progression. (Intern only available for 2 days as already volunteering 3 days per week)
- Set fixed rules (ask if unsure, discuss concerns before work, set work duties, daily feedback and times and writing in a "Communication Book" for carers information and for providing them an opportunity to report back and to reinforce achievements or address concerns)
- Set up off-job training to address numeracy aspects of the role (weighing and measuring)

- As confidence with tasks increased, faded coaching to a mentoring role and collaborated with natural supports on work development.
- Set up own areas of responsibility to further confidence.
- Standards and productivity were observed to be an automatic response with tasks that became familiar.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

- Once confidence had built in small 1-2-1 environment, tasks were added in different work environments and moving into the main kitchen.
- Established a high level of ability and working knowledge from previous work and used this to encourage independence and the resultant increase of confidence, which in turn prompted an open mind to try new things
- Reinforced the ability to learn by allocating own responsibilities, which highlighted initiative capabilities.

What we learned

- Not to be carried away by the momentum of progress and successes by forgetting fundamental learning requirements i.e. checking understanding. Intern has the tendency to not query as also boosted by own success.
- Intern's ability to see jobs and get on with them without being told has demonstrated her comfort in the work environment and the potential for developing skills especially related to good hand-eye-co-ordination for accurate knife and cutting skills and food presentation. The orderly and organised approach to her work is an important part of the job and with her ability to use initiative, once duties are known has been noted by the work place provider and will be added to Employability portfolio.

What we are taking forward

- A workable learning and support plan.
- New- found confidence and abilities.
- The opportunity to maintain the momentum

How we are sharing it

Intern will have ownership of guidance notes and strategies that have proved successful in the work place which can be passed on to a future employer or learning situation or via Access to Work Programme.

What advice we would give to others

- The importance of individualised work based learning strategies and the consistency of information, action and support from all involved.
- Change is a fact of life and although we might try to avoid it through good planning, it sometimes cannot be avoided. With the right support, change can be accepted to a better degree and the knock on effect is having a more flexible employee. We have discussed the normalcy of change, demonstrating this with the change in duties, environment, people, increased confidence etc.

- Endeavouring to create a positive and comfortable learning and working environment is a sound plan, but be prepared to be flexible or even change the plan, with the discovering of the unexpected i.e. a giant leap in progress or a backward step.
- Try not to be carried away by the momentum of progress by losing sight of fundamental needs, in a desire for success.
- Ensure that over time employees supporting those with disabilities do not forget their particular needs, especially at times when changes are being implemented.