

Induction Guide

Introduction

Employment is perhaps the biggest investment of resources that any authority makes, and the aim for all of us is to have the best possible person in post. Why then do so many of us get the initial induction process wrong?

A recent survey into training needs of Arts Officers in local authorities indicated that 46% of all officers surveyed had not undergone any form of induction programme on starting their jobs. This sheet is intended as an aid to local authority arts recruitment and may serve as a check list for officer induction for people either starting a new job, or being promoted within an authority to a new position.

Pre-employment

- The induction process starts at the interview, and not after appointment.
- Have a clear picture of the vacant post, the skills and abilities an applicant needs in relation to the job.
- Ensure that the job description and person specifications are appropriate and up to date.
- Send information about the authority and service with recruitment forms or (if after short-listing) with interview procedures.
- Remember that recruitment is a two way process, and that the applicant has a choice too.
- Information on service and catchment area is valuable so that the applicant is not going into a situation cold. And remember that getting the best candidate for the position may entail initial "selling" of the service.

On Recruitment

- Start informally over a cup of tea or coffee, and avoid rushing in with too much initial information. Remember that initial bad impressions are hard to break down.
- If possible appoint a mentor to take responsibility for the social role of integrating the new member of staff. This can be done on a formal or informal basis.
- The traditional tour and introductions can be daunting for new employees, but also very useful, as members of staff will recognise the new employee and may well help with the settling process. Remember that this is a two way process, with mutual benefits to new employee and existing staff as new relationships develop.
- Plan a programme over the next few weeks where the new candidate can spend some time with different sections and departments to experience the ways sections work and the way that people work in them.
- If possible arrange a team meeting for the first afternoon (or at least the first week) to get staff that will be working with the new officer together.

Induction programmes take longer than one morning or a week (although there will be much information in the first week to be shared). Remember to plan ahead and keep time for the new officer to assist the settling in period.

Other areas of working practice should be staggered over a longer period. Monitor the process and ensure that you are there for support and encouragement for as long as the process takes.

Useful Periods

- **Pre-induction:** reading matter; information packs on service and catchment area. Perhaps a post-interview visit and familiarisation meeting.
- **First Day.** Ensure you have kept enough time to give the new employee your full attention. Meeting with key people, “the tour” of the work place, emergency procedures, and if possible programme a team meeting.
- **First week.** Additional documentation (policy, service documents, action programmes, service priorities, departmental procedures) geographical familiarisation, further meetings with key staff, accounts and administrative systems, in-depth briefings from close colleagues.
- **First Month.** Visits to other sections and associated services/departments. The political framework, experience of a committee and committee reporting (if appropriate). The policy framework. Planned review meeting with manager, identification of training needs and areas of potential development. Establishment of personal plans for next twelve months.
- **First year.** Regular review meetings with colleagues, line manager and if possible, mentor, and give full support throughout this period. And remember to programme time for this.

Topics to cover during induction

- Geography of work area, toilets, refreshment areas
- The nature of the post
- Key tasks and areas of responsibility
- The nature of the Authority
- The nature of the arts/cultural sector
- Key contacts (and written contact & telephone list)
- The nature of the section/department
- Policies, Policy statements, strategies and action plans
- Health & Safety issues; emergency evacuation, any special requirements and procedures
- Customer service and equal opportunities procedures and practices
- Lines of communication inside and out of the immediate organisation
- Key people
- Direct service responsibilities, development issues and action programmes
- Geographical orientation and information about catchment area
- Budgets and financial accountability, financial regulations etc.
- Sources of information and support
- Training needs
- Personal/domestic needs & personnel issues (holidays/sickness/grievance/disciplinary procedures etc.)
- Administrative details (ordering procedures, inventories, filing systems, typing and paper related procedures and layouts, etc.)
- Environmental issues (recycling policies, energy efficiency etc.)
- Consultation procedures.
- Monitoring & evaluation procedures, performance indicators, etc
- Committee processes, timescales of meetings etc, the political framework,
- Marketing and promotion procedures (if appropriate)
- Media and press contact

Remember that it will take time to assimilate information and work into a new role. Often, because we can easily accept the appearance of a new-comer into our own environment, we assume they feel as comfortable with it as we are ourselves, whereas the mental task of “fitting in” to an new employee is much more challenging - if invisible to the naked eye. For this reason, Induction needs to be pro-active, not passive, and requires effort by those already established to support new colleagues for long after their arrival. Many experienced staff developers and managers recognise that it may take at least 12 months before a person is working to an optimum level, and support should be available throughout the process. Staff are your most valuable resource invest time in the induction process and the investment will reap dividends.