

SUPPORTING YOUNG TRAINEES



Who are young trainees and why do they matter?

As the NDIS is implemented, we need more young people in the disability workforce.

By 'young', we mean anyone born between 1980 and 2001 - an age group referred to as the Millennial generation.

'Trainees' refers to anyone undergoing workplace training, including formalised traineeships.

Supporting more young people to enter the disability workforce will meet growing demand from younger scheme users who want to be supported by young people. Young support workers can often identify more easily with the interests of other young people and engage in age-appropriate activities.

Young trainees can bring a rich diversity of perspectives and skills into our workforce, such as innovative ways to use technology for communication, community engagement and leisure.

Research also suggests that Millennials have a strong social conscience and desire to make a difference.

Forecasting suggests that, by 2020, Millennials will make up 50 per cent of our workforce. This new generation is the future. We can resist, or we can open ourselves to a mutual learning experience in which we positively engage and support young people joining our workforce.

What are traineeships?

Traineeships are similar to apprenticeships, but shorter - generally around one to two years in duration.

Traditionally, apprentices learned everything on the job and were assigned to a recognised 'master of the trade'. This was a long-term relationship during which apprentices were nurtured to learn the skills, attitude and experiences needed to become competent in their trade and to eventually take over the 'master'

role. Think of a violin maker working with a master craftsman for years to learn and absorb the craft of violin making.

Traineeships still rely on on-the-job learning to learn their work. Trainees still need a competent, trustworthy 'master' to teach them their work, to believe in them, and to guide and nurture their growth.

Research on apprenticeships and traineeships in 2011 found that for traineeships to be successful, they require:

- Effective matching of trainees to the workplace
- Clear articulation of expectations of trainees
- Support for the trainee 'learning how to learn'
- More pastoral support for trainees and their employers

Other research demonstrates that employment outcomes and employer satisfaction on completion of learning are, on the whole, more successful when learning happens via on-the-job training rather than in an off-site setting.

This does not preclude additional training in blocks or accessing online materials to deepen and broaden the trainee's knowledge.

Modern Australian traineeships are a formal partnership between the employer, learner and registered training organisation (RTO). In the disability sector, the person being supported by the trainee forms an important fourth party. The employer should ensure that people using their services have input into teaching and assessment as appropriate.

A traineeship sees the employee enrolled in a qualification, and learning skills and knowledge on the job.

As part of this arrangement, the employer and RTO work together to ensure a cohesive learning experience for the trainee. The RTO conducts assessment for the qualification components by observing the learner on the job and asking questions about how they are applying the required knowledge

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to the work they are doing. Questions may be oral or written. The assessor also talks with the workplace supervisor to ascertain whether the trainee's skills and knowledge are applied consistently in their role.

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers provide a placement, support and connection function for learners, employers and RTOs in support of a successful completion of the qualification.

How are traineeships funded?

Traineeship enrolment fees are subsidised to varying degrees by state governments. The fees are generally provided to the RTO. The employer or learner pays the remainder of the fee. In general, qualifications that are linked with job roles connected to growth industries are more highly funded by state governments.

Additionally, employer incentives are available to offset the cost of taking on a trainee. These are funded by the federal government. This incentive recognises the investment being made by an organisation in providing appropriately supportive supervision through the life of the traineeship.

Why do young trainees need support?

Young trainees need support because they are young and inexperienced. For some, it is their first experience of the world outside school. For many, it is their first experience of the disability sector. Compassion and understanding are always important – even more so for those encountering life, work and the emotional intensity of disability work for the first time.

Young trainees need our support because they are the future workforce. Further, the way we support and train young people will directly affect our reputation in the employment marketplace. It will also affect our ability to attract and retain young people accessing services.

How do we best support apprentices and trainees?

This generation is profoundly different to previous generations in the way they embrace technology and in their experience of life. Many have been encouraged to 'achieve their dreams' and believe anything is possible and available to them, and expect rapid progression. Others have been alienated and disconnected by technology and the workaholicism of the previous generation and are unsure how to relate comfortably with others.

In this changing and unstable world, many are looking for congruence between the messages of organisations and the reality of their experience. These young people represent our modern society. We can learn from this generation, and the investment in them by the disability sector is an investment in the future of supporting people with disability.

Do not underestimate the effect of kind, encouraging and specific support. Harsh words and behaviour will impact a young trainee's sense of self during a formative time. Our behaviour towards young trainees often models the way they will learn to behave with colleagues and people using our services.

Supporting and engaging trainees is therefore very similar to how we engage and support all employees. We need to make sure that they:

- Understand the organisation's purpose and strategy
- Know how their role contributes to the achievement of this purpose and strategy
- Feel valued and recognised for their contribution, listened to, able to participate in decisions affecting them, and emotionally and personally respected

Specific ways of supporting young trainees and apprentices joining your organisation include: open communication, mentoring, providing a welcoming environment, and having someone available to help.

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In a traineeship model, the employer shares responsibility for training. In their roles as workplace supervisor and joint trainer, employers must not assume that the trainee can work independently, nor that they know how to do anything that the supervisor might consider 'common sense'.

Trainees are new learners, and employers need to patiently provide explicit instruction on new tasks and offer appropriate guidance until the trainee demonstrates competence. They need to engage in conversation with the RTO about how best to address skills the trainee is struggling with. The workplace should view the trainee as an investment in their future workforce.

According to Price Waterhouse, superficial changes and tokenism will not work in supporting young people at work. Instead, organisations need to provide:

- Congruence between the messages and the reality of employee experience
- Growth and development opportunities, such as special assignments and mentoring
- Rapid advancement for high achievers, ensuring they have strong foundations for their new role, and support as they learn it
- Honest feedback, in real time, that highlights positive contributions and improvements on key competencies
- Creative and flexible policies
- Metrics, data and surveys that allow their voices to be heard and understood
- Freedom and flexibility to decide how to meet concrete targets

Employers should also expect and implement strategies for turnover.

Interestingly, it will only take another 10 years for the next generation to join the workforce, and neither generation will be content with the status quo.

As a matter of business necessity, we need to keep inclusion and person-centred people management front and centre.

If you want to know more:

<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/>

<https://www.nds.org.au/item/best-practice-vocational-placement-guidelines>

<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/sites/ausapps/files/publication-documents/ncverreport1.pdf>

<https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/consulting/documents/millennials-at-work.pdf>

TCCI 2015 Resources for employers of trainees:
<https://tinyurl.com/pplcult>

The TCCI resources were developed by the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to advise employers about how to establish and support traineeships from a legal perspective.

This information sheet is part of a People and Culture Project funded in 2017 by the Tasmanian Department of State Growth.

Search for People and Culture Project if you would like to see the full suite.



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