

Top 10 tips for employers to create great workplaces for young people

Young people report that their limited employment experience and age can make them feel vulnerable when they start in a new workplace. They felt a culture of positive communication and trust between young employees and employers was the key to addressing this and supporting them to thrive in a workplace.

1. Provide comprehensive inductions

Comprehensive onboarding and training support young people to succeed in a new role. Develop ways to help young people to understand and meet the expectations and requirements of their role

Example: Provide written and verbal explanations of company policies and job requirements to a new young employee, talk through these in detail and prompt the young person to ask questions.

2. Create a dialogue

Regular opportunities for young people to ask questions and receive feedback from supervisors help them learn how to do the job and become more skilled in their role.

Example: Create structured and scheduled meetings with young employees where they have space to ask questions and discuss any challenges they have faced at work. Regularly check in and encourage young employees to ask questions they might feel nervous to ask.

3. Promote peer mentoring

Regular mentoring sessions from more experienced employees is a great model for having supportive conversations with young people. Young employees can also become great mentors to newer young people in a workplace as well.

Example: Assigning a mentor to a new staff member is an effective way for them to develop leadership skills, while benefitting the new employee by providing an extra level of support. Young people with some experience in the organisation can be great peer mentors for newer young employees.

4. Be proactive with Workplace Health and Safety

Providing relevant training, safety information, and access to mechanisms to raise issues helps young people feel psychologically and physically safe at work. Having regular opportunities for young people to speak to supervisors or senior managers can make them feel comfortable talking about safety concerns when they arise.

Example: Promoting a workplace culture that values safety by identifying areas of risk or concern and providing training that directly addresses these areas of concern. Get feedback from young employees about whether they feel safer at work because of the training.

5. Champion mental wellbeing

Implementing strategies to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all employees supports young employees who may not know how or where to seek support. Many young people have a good understanding about mental wellbeing and would be eager to help workplaces learn more about this.

Example: Your workplace can participate in workplace mental health events such as R U OK Day. This communicates to young staff that their mental health is important by their employers. It also provides a good opportunity to check in with employees.

6. Embrace inclusivity

Promote a culture of inclusivity that values the diversity in age, gender, culture, ability, beliefs, and life experiences that individual employees bring to the workplace. Ensure that bullying and discrimination are not tolerated.

Example: Celebrating community events such as NAIDOC Week, International Women's Day, Wear It Purple, Harmony Week, or International Day of People with Disability are one way to show all your employees that your workplace celebrates diversity. Young employees might be keen to lead the organisation in these celebrations.

7. Leverage young people's skills

Explore ways to identify the unique expertise that young employees bring through their diverse backgrounds and life experiences and how this could be utilised by the workplace.

Example: Ask your young employees what their unique skills are and how they might like to use them in the workplace. Providing these opportunities for young employees to take initiative will allow them to become more confident in their role.

8. Support a work/life balance

Work with young people to help them learn how to manage commitments outside of work such as school, study, training, and caring responsibilities, alongside their employment.

Example: Set clear expectations about the commitment you expect from your young employees and allow them the opportunity to speak to you about their outside commitments.

9. Educate about employees' rights

Providing information about workplace rights in relation to wages, entitlements and conditions makes young people feel valued and supported.

Example: Provide accessible information about workplace rights and responsibilities to your young employees. See the resources section of this guide for some youth-friendly examples.

10. Facilitate constructive feedback

Young people want to receive feedback that is practical and actionable. Providing regular, clear, constructive feedback to young employees supports them to learn how to be become better in their role.

Example: When giving feedback to a young person, make sure to provide clear examples about what a young person did well and what they can do differently next time they undertake the task.