

## 4. LOCAL & GENERAL PROCEDURES

This section

- (a) introduces issues relating to the recruitment and induction of new staff/volunteers;*
- (b) deals with the introduction of new staff members to local and general procedures;*
- (c) provides guidelines for local and general procedures;*
- (d) provides sample procedures for guideline purposes which can be substituted with local procedures, where appropriate.*

The first day of any new job can be daunting and it is important that a system is in place to facilitate the introduction of new staff members to existing procedures and to allow them to settle in as quickly as possible. It is equally important that staff are provided with ongoing support, supervision, mentoring and training throughout their employment.

Every office or organisation will have different procedures or systems in place to implement their work. ***It is recommended, therefore, that the information provided here be supplemented or substituted with local documents or manuals, as appropriate.***

Within this section, there are nine sub-sections, as follows:

- (1) New Staff – Recruitment and Induction***
- (2) Introduction of New Staff Members***
- (3) Premises/ Facilities/ Equipment***
- (4) Introduction to Organisation***
- (5) Introduction to Area***
- (6) Security***
- (7) Health & Safety***
- (8) Office Procedures***
- (9) Sources of Help***

## **(1) New Staff – Recruitment and Induction**

### **Recruitment**

Most organisations operate clear and effective selection procedures when recruiting full-time staff. Check your organisation's procedures with local management.

However, there are often times when staff will be recruited directly by the Youth Information Centre either as part-time workers, Community Employment Scheme participants or volunteers. It is important that there is a clear recruitment procedure in place to ensure that the selection process is effective. This includes:

- *Advertising procedure*
- *Interview Process*
- *Selection Criteria*

### ***Sample Selection Procedure for New Volunteers***

- Advertise locally, giving clear details about the type of person required;
- Request prospective volunteers to complete an application form;
- Ensure that appropriate checks and vetting procedures, as required by the management organisation, are implemented;
- Arrange for an informal chat/interview with the Youth Information Officer (and a volunteer if required);
- Organise a basic training course for prospective volunteers;
- During the training course, arrange for prospective volunteers to do some practical work alongside existing volunteers and paid staff;
- On completion of the training course, arrange for each prospective volunteer to have a formal interview with the Youth Information Officer;
- Following selection, commence induction.

## **Induction**

Check with local management regarding employment documents, which are issued to new staff. Any new staff members should be supplied with all staff documents as soon as possible.

Documents may include the following:

- ***Job Description***

A new staff member should understand his/her role and position within the organisation so it is important to provide a *Job Description* outlining duties and expectations. The job description should be detailed and clear. You will find a sample job description for a Youth Information Co-ordinator in the *Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres*.

- ***Staff Handbook***

A Staff Handbook outlines the rights and responsibilities of staff as well as procedures for administering policy. Issues covered usually include:

*General Information; Allowances; Code of Conduct; Confidentiality; Dress; Contract of Employment; Disciplinary Procedure; Grievance Procedure; Equal Opportunities Policy; Harassment; Health, Safety and Welfare Policy; Hours of Duty/ Time in Lieu; Leave; Pension; Probation; Recruitment, Transfers and Promotion; Redundancy; Retirement; Supervision and Support; Trade Union Duties.*

- ***Contract of Employment***

A contract of employment sets out the conditions of employment including responsibilities, duties and terms.

- ***Code of Practice***

The purpose of a Code of Practice is to ensure that basic standards are adhered to. It helps to support and guide all workers – whether voluntary or paid. It is designed to maximise the quality of the information service provided to young people.

## **(2) Introduction of New Staff Members**

It is important to introduce a new staff member to *all* staff and to do this as soon as possible. Repeat names and encourage conversation.

### ***Introduce staff who are present***

It is important to introduce staff who are present as soon as is appropriate. Their role within the Centre/organisation should be explained and how to contact them if required.

### ***Mention staff who are absent***

If there are any other staff who are absent at the time, it is important that they are mentioned, their roles explained and how to contact them if required. It is also important to introduce these staff on their return.

### ***Specific Roles***

Introduce staff with specific roles outside their ordinary job. These include the Social Secretary or the Health & Safety Officer.

### ***Other significant people***

If there are any other significant people who will be in contact with the Youth Information Centre, it is important that they are mentioned at this point and introduced formally when the opportunity arises.

### ***Staff list***

It is advisable to provide the new staff member with a list of all staff including their location and contact numbers.

### **(3) Premises/ Facilities/ Equipment**

It is important that the new staff member is introduced to the layout of the premises and its facilities. It is also important to demonstrate the use of office equipment and explain any restriction that may apply e.g. in relation to telephone calls.

#### **Premises**

##### *\* The layout of the building*

A tour of the building where the Centre is based should be given on a new staff member's first morning at work. Point out fire exits and security button locations.

##### *\* House Rules*

Explain any 'house rules' e.g. in relation to smoking room/s or cleaning rota.

##### *\* Opening/ Closing Procedures*

Demonstrate how to open and close the premises.

#### ***Sample Locking-up Procedure***

- Shut down and unplug computers;
- Unplug printers, photocopier, radio;
- Check that the cash box is appropriately secured;
- Make sure windows are closed;
- Unplug ALL heaters;
- Turn off lights;
- Turn on Alarm if necessary;
- Lock and bolt both locks on outer door.

## Facilities

### \* *Amenities*

Point out all amenities including toilets/ canteen/ photocopier/ offices.  
Demonstrate how to use any equipment, where necessary.

### \* *Provisions*

Explain how office provisions such as tea/ milk/ cleaning can be obtained e.g. is there a float or is it bought out of petty cash?

## Equipment

There are various types of equipment used in an office and it is important that new staff familiarise themselves with the use of each apparatus.

Equipment can include:

- *Photocopier*
- *Computer*
- *Telephone*
- *FAX machine*
- Training must be provided;
- Any restrictions must be outlined; e.g. if personal telephone calls must be paid for;
- Any procedures attached to equipment should be outlined e.g. telephone book.

## (4) Introduction to Organisation

New staff members should be given an introduction to the parent organisation, outlining policies and objectives and clarifying structures. Areas to be covered include:

- ***Profile of the organisation***
  - Status
  - History
  - Funding sources
  - Geography of services
  - Target Group
  
- ***Services and Activities of the Organisation***
  - Development work
  - Youth Information Centre
  - Youth Arts (if available)
  - Outward Bound etc. (if available)
  
- ***Staff Structure***
  - Organisational/ Responsibility Chart
  - Personnel Profiles – Who does what
  - Staff Contact Numbers
  - Agencies with whom we work
  
- ***Aims & Objectives***
  - Mission Statement  
(*A Mission Statement provides focus by driving strategy, ‘what business are we in?’ It is a statement of philosophy and purpose*)
  - Code of Practice (if relevant)
  - Vision
  - Values  
(*Provide a sense of common direction for all employees and guidelines for their day to day behaviour*)
  - Strengths/ Weaknesses

## (5) Introduction to Area

It is important that an information worker is familiar with the area in which s/he works. Any new staff member should, therefore, be introduced to the locality and the make-up of the local population. This can include:

- ***Tour of the area*** - pointing out landmarks or location of various organisations;
- ***Map of the area*** – showing the location of the Youth Information Centre;
- ***Community Context*** – explanation of any local issues, community needs, rural/urban areas, unemployment figures, areas of disadvantage, economic profile etc.
- ***Demographic Factors*** – description of age profile, percentage of population under 25 etc.
- ***Directory of Services*** – providing listing of local services.

## (6) Security

### Personal Security

All staff are entitled to be secure within their work environment and adequate protection must be provided to ensure this security. This may require the development of policies concerning personal security issues including:

- Staff not being left on their own in the Centre;
- Staff being equipped with panic buttons, either fixed or mobile;
- Staff being equipped with a mobile phone if working late or out of the office.

### Building Security

Youth Information Centres contain equipment, which is worth a lot of money. While every Centre should be covered by insurance, something like an unlocked door may invalidate this insurance. Furthermore, if outside personnel are allowed to wander freely around the premises, how can confidentiality be guaranteed?

Therefore,

- the last person to leave the building should be responsible for checking that all doors and windows are closed and locked. This includes gates, side doors, and shared doors where applicable;
- the last person to leave should double-check that all relevant switches are turned off;
- outside personnel allowed on premises e.g. visitors and friends should be trustworthy.

However, if outside personnel do visit, it is important, for reasons of confidentiality, that they remain in the public areas. They should not be left unsupervised in any rooms or offices which are not in public use. Finally, outside personnel, or trainees on work experience, should not be left in the building on their own.

### ***Keyholders***

The aim should be to keep the number of keys floating around to a minimum. However, the main difficulty in achieving this is the need for staff to work different shifts. Therefore, a system to facilitate the transfer of keys between staff should be created.

## (7) Health & Safety

It is important that the Youth Information Centre has a health, safety and welfare policy. Consult your Organisation about its policy in this area.

All practical steps should be taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of staff, as well as of all persons who use your service or visit your premises.

These steps should include:

- The provision of adequate working conditions and proper facilities for Centre staff;
- Ensuring that any work undertaken by staff poses no risk to health or safety;
- Advising staff on the *Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997* and its relevance to health & safety. This includes the taking of rest periods/ time off/ holidays, when earned, to avoid the onset of fatigue or unnecessary stress;
- Advising staff on the taking of relevant precautions while using electrical or other equipment;

Special attention should be paid to rest periods while using computers and VDUs;

- Encouraging staff to co-operate with the agency in all safety matters and ensuring that they are aware of the importance of health and safety in the workplace;
- Drawing up of specific Health, Safety and Welfare policies, as deemed necessary by your organisation. These could include policies relating to:
  - *Alcohol & Drug Abuse*
  - *Bullying at Work*

- Organising regular Fire drills;

Staff should be informed of Fire Safety policy, as well as evacuation procedures in the event of fire;

- Training of staff in relation to the organisation's Health and Safety policy.

## **(8) Office Procedures**

Each office has administrative procedures, which are carried out on a regular basis in order to facilitate communication and the smooth running of the office.

They may include:

- a) Sample Daily/Weekly Procedure Checklist*
- b) Message Book*
- c) Stationery Ordering Procedure*
- d) Cash Box*

### *(a) Daily/Weekly Procedures*

It may be useful to give a new staff member a list of the daily/weekly procedures that can be checked off each day/week until the staff member becomes familiar with them.

### **Sample Daily Procedures**

- Open premises and turn off the alarm. Turn on the lights, photocopier, computer etc.
- Check the telephone messaging service, e-mail and Messages Book. Check if there are any messages that need to be answered;
- Put out blank Query/Special Services forms for the day. Write today's date on the top of them. Correlate statistics from previous day and transfer to computer.
- Fill out entry in Query/Special Services form as soon as you have dealt with a query/request in person, or by telephone, e-mail or fax. See Section 10 *Statistics* for guidelines on how to complete these forms.
- Check the day's post, date-stamp each article and respond, as appropriate. If for filing, put classification number on the document. If a reply is required, place in Correspondence File. Deal with any queries that have arrived by post.
- Check the day's newspapers for information. If you find something of interest, mark it with an asterisk or something that will attract attention. This can then be followed up or cut out at the end of the day or week.

- Check if there is any typing to be done.
- At the end of the day, implement the closing-up procedure.

### **Sample Weekly Procedures**

- Fill out the Detailed Query Record Form on a chosen, designated day;
- Replicate the Comhairle Citizens Information Database (if applicable);
- Prepare rotas & timesheets for staff, and arrange for any relief staff required for the week ahead (if necessary);
- Check display units/stands for any out of date material. Decide on a theme for the following week;
- Check the posters on the noticeboards and remove any out of date notices;
- Cut out anything from the newspapers that has been marked, classify and file. Leave the remainder for recycling or dump.

#### ***(b) Message Book***

A Message Book is an ideal way to ensure good communication between staff. It is also useful for keeping details of any person whom you may need to contact with further information at a later date.

*Useful Tips for Efficient Use of Message Book:*

- *Keep the Message Book where it is easy to locate;*
- *Check the Book as soon as you return to the office;*
- *If you are leaving a message for someone, clearly mark the date, time, name of person the message is for, and your name;*
- *Mark off a message once it is dealt with.*

#### ***(c) Ordering Stationery***

Check with management for procedures relating to the ordering of stationery. You may be required to create an account with an Office Supplies/Stationery company.

When the stationery arrives, check that it corresponds with the attached invoice and that it is as ordered. Sign the delivery note, keep a copy and file. Organise payment of invoice.

***(d) Cash Box***

Check locally with management if there is a cash float available and establish the procedures for, and restrictions on, spending. Ensure that all staff are familiar with the policy on spending from the Cash Box. Emphasise the importance of retaining receipts.

**(9) Sources of Help**

Persons/agencies for whom contact numbers should be given to new staff include the following:

- Centre Co-ordinator (including his/her mobile number)
- Designated Co-ordinator in a nearby Centre
- Youth Information Resource Unit
- Youth Service
- Primary agencies for specific queries
- Alarm company
- Emergency services including the local Garda Station