

Employing young people with experience of homelessness: guidelines for employers



Homelessness, no matter how short, can have a long-term and life-changing effect on those who experience it. For young people aged 16-25, homelessness can promote instability and act as a barrier to progression at what should be a crucial time in the development of their lives. There are many reasons why young people experience homelessness. It may not be safe for them to stay at home, they may have experienced eviction or family life may have become too hard. Therefore, it is vital that government, local government, charities and the private sector work together to support young people to overcome homelessness, progress to independence and live meaningful lives.

As part of our report entitled *'Human Costs and Lost Potential: The Real Cost of Youth Homelessness'* and our commitment to ending youth homelessness, Centrepont has developed the following guide for employers to support vulnerable young people into employment. This guide was designed in collaboration with colleagues from Centrepont's CP Works service, who support young people to access employment, education and training opportunities, and young people with experiences of homelessness.

Recommendations for employers:

- ✓ Create entry level jobs that are really accessible for young people with experience of homelessness: **entry level jobs should not require previous work experience.**
- ✓ Create an **inclusive workplace and a safe space** for young people with experience of homelessness. Workshops on the causes and consequences of homelessness and volunteer days supporting a local charity could help in building a **trauma-informed environment*** in your workplace to successfully induct young people, enable them to progress in their new job and give them a fair chance.
- ✓ Implement a **buddy system** for new employees in your company. A friendly face checking on them, not exclusively on their work tasks, could help them in their first few months in the company.
- ✓ Support them with **ad-hoc training**: they might have missed years of education and still catching up on important skills.
- ✓ Be patient: young people with experience of homelessness might need more **supervision and feedback** in their first months on the job.
- ✓ Install **predictable routines and schedules** and be ready to adapt them to their needs.
- ✓ Support them in **building their motivation** by giving them a sense of belonging, as well as achievable and co-designed goals.
- ✓ Be transparent and clear about **career progression** and **manage their expectations.**
- ✓ ... and finally **let them make mistakes** and learn from them, providing feedback, leadership and an example they can learn from.

"When I was homeless, I struggled with missing shifts because of having to go to different places from wherever I was sleeping to leave my stuff. It would've been helpful to have someone checking on me, chat to get out of that state and into work mode. Work was my only sense of normality, but to get in trouble for the missing shifts really didn't help."

Emily, 26 from Manchester

"Young people may need that flexibility, especially if they have been recently given a new home. For instance, when I got my flat and moved in, there was an issue with gas and electricity and I was in a full time job. I had to take a day out of my annual leave and when you are on your probationary period, this is going to affect you and how you perform for that role."

Grace, 27 from London



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*To reach a Trauma-Informed Environment in your workplace you have to take into account the emotional background and psychological needs of your employees.

Leila's experience in the workplace:

Leila, 19 from London, just started a new job in the hospitality industry and highlighted the importance of having a caring authority figure in the workplace, especially because she missed a parental figure growing up. She really appreciates that her manager sat down with her to design her initial training program. After that, the manager organized weekly check-ins so Leila was able to feedback on things that she has struggled with and highlight what she has enjoyed in the past week. Also her co-workers have been very considerate and thoughtful. For example, one day a co-worker noticed that she had not had breakfast before starting her shift so told her to go to the back for five minutes and have something to eat.

These experiences contrast with her first work experience, where issues at home and a demanding workplace meant that Leila had felt unable to cope. As such, Leila felt misunderstood by and isolated from her employer and colleagues, because she could not perform to the high standards that were expected. With no one checking in on her, she ended up not performing as she would have liked and finally realized it was not a good workplace for her.

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To find out more, scan the QR code and read our report *'Human Costs and Lost Potential: The Real Cost of Youth Homelessness'*, or contact our team at prc@centrepoin.org



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