

Handbook

B support

A work

R regulations, and

T application

Foreword

Please allow us to tell you a little about this handbook before you read any further. The Support, Work, Regulations and Application Handbook (BART Handbook) has been put together in the hope that you will find it a useful guide in all kinds of incidents and events that you encounter during the course of your work. It may be small, but it is very comprehensive.

Of course, we cannot pretend that this handbook will be able to provide an answer for all your questions. As such, it is always wise to approach your Personnel Department for information on exactly which rules, regulations and protocols apply in your particular company.

Introduction

Providing the mentally handicapped with a place within the organisation

Stichting OMIJ-Rijnmond aims to offer people with little prospect of employment in the labour market the opportunity to develop themselves via work. This objective also includes offering people with an intellectual disability a place within the organisation.

OMIJ tries to place everyone working at OMIJ in a suitable position, whether they have an intellectual disability, are claiming disability benefit, or have a completely different reason for working at OMIJ. Another basic principle is that all of the rules applicable within OMIJ apply across the board. The majority of rules applicable at OMIJ have been laid down, in terms and conditions of employment and privacy regulations, for example. So, these rules also apply for people with an intellectual disability.

However, OMIJ also aims to take account of each individual employee's personal characteristics wherever possible.

The people responsible for realizing all of this are OMIJ's managers. This booklet has been put together in order to help managers at OMIJ manage staff with an intellectual disability, but can also be used by other companies wishing to integrate people with an intellectual disability into their workforce.

In order to promote a good understanding of the topics covered in this booklet, several points for attention are mentioned briefly below:

Work versus organised day activities

Care institutions organise various daytime activities for people with an intellectual disability. The difference between taking part in these activities and working in a company is that a company expects its employees to perform, to contribute towards production. What is more, in business, the key objective is not to ensure that employees are kept "occupied", but to achieve the ultimate result, in the form of products and services.

Social contacts

By working, you meet and get to know other people. For most people, contact with colleagues is an important element of their work. The same also applies at OMIJ, where people with an intellectual disability are integrated into existing departments and come into contact with "normal" colleagues. There are indications that suggest this results leads to an increased independence of the persons with an intellectual disability.

Contract of employment

None of OMIJ's staff with a intellectual disability have a contract of employment, as they could otherwise risk losing their entitlement to benefit and relief. In order to establish a

legal basis for the relationship between OMIJ and these members of staff¹, a so-called *volunteer contract* is entered into, setting out the individual rights and obligations applicable to voluntary members of staff.

Finally

As a supervisor², you will frequently be confronted with situations that are entirely new to you and that are not discussed in this booklet. Try to work through them yourself, but ask for advice from a colleague, your own manager or a personnel officer where you feel you need help.

¹ The word “staff” is used for all workers, paid and voluntary workers, but excludes professional workers from care-support providing organisations.

² The word “supervisor” used for OMIJ employees in (lower or middle) management jobs who have persons with disabilities among their teams.

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Theme 1

Safety and Structure

Case

A new supervisor starts in an existing group

A certain group of staff members and supervisors has been working together for many years. However, the departure of one of the group's supervisors leaves a vacancy to be filled. After a selection procedure lasting a number of weeks, Bart is taken on as the group's new supervisor. Right from Bart's very first day, the group compares him with the supervisor he replaced. Bart does not agree with a number of the group's standard rules.

Bart has submitted a plan to the Board, indicating a number of changes he would like to introduce within the group. He is given a free rein.

The group is not happy with Bart's changes and refuses to cooperate. They even refuse to carry on working if Bart insists on his plans. Bart pushes his changes through, resulting in an enormous increase in the number of staff reporting sick. Several staff request a transfer.

Specific Background Information

How do people with an intellectual disability cope with changes at work?

Structure and continuity are often extremely important to people with an intellectual disability. They rely heavily on their supervisor and find it difficult to cope with sudden changes. So, the departure of one supervisor and the arrival of another, or the introduction of different rules, is not always easy for them to understand. In some cases, this may even result in a sense of unsafety. Some staff find it difficult to express this sense of unsafety and may become angry or unruly, fail to turn up for work or simply report sick.

Background Information

Safety: A personal sense of trust in individuals and/or one's surroundings. This feeling is partly created by familiarity with certain individuals and/or surroundings.

Structure: The repetition of a clear and fixed pattern that offers staff a sense of peace and safety, so that they know where they stand.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are:

- Safety: trust, surroundings, individuals, warmth, recognisable, familiar, feeling, personal.
- Structure: security, pattern, rules, management, repetition, clear, offers safety, knowing where you stand, peace.

Safety and structure are linked. The provision of proper structure results in a sense of safety. This might be the way in which a day is structured. Each day, from beginning to end, both at home and at work, has a fixed structure. For example, when you arrive at work, the first thing you often do is get yourself a coffee. Because you know where you stand and what to expect, there is no reason for any concern. However, when proper structure is absent or damaged by unexpected events, the result is unrest and the possible disruption of the sense of safety achieved. After all, you no longer know where you stand or what to expect.

Tips for the Supervisor

How should supervisors manage the sense of safety and structure already achieved in an existing group?

- Set an example where changes are concerned. Tell people what you are doing and do what you say.
- Be clear about what you expect.
- Check that people have understood what you mean.
- Explain what you are hoping to achieve (or draw this for them).
- Take into account the feelings of your staff, individually and as a group.
- Give staff time to get used to you before introducing changes.
- Always involve staff in the changes that you want to make.
- Allow staff to have some influence in the changes to be made.
- Let staff have a say in important changes.
- Introduce changes gradually. Spread them out over a reasonable period of time.

Theme 2

Communication

Case

*Communication about someone with an intellectual disability,
when the person in question is present*

Hans is a man of 24 with an intellectual disability. He works in a shop with men and women of different ages, all with a similar problem. Another person constantly present in the shop is Bart, the supervisor, who tries to let staff to work as independently as possible. The atmosphere in the shop is very easy-going and Hans and the others are able to joke and express their feelings.

One day, when people are being shown around the shop, Hans is very excited and constantly tries to catch the attention of Bart and the people being shown around. At a certain point, Hans touches a female colleague's breasts. Bart laughs the incident away, remarking on Hans' sexual inclination to the people he is showing around. Hans does not respond to Bart's remark, but the other staff are very amused.

Specific Background Information

To what extent can you communicate with an employee with an intellectual disability?

Communication is always difficult, as you must assume that much of what you want to convey will not be understood. This does not mean that you should not try.

Communicating with people with an intellectual disability can be difficult, but need not be.

Allow yourself the time and take the time to communicate your message clearly. If necessary, use a pen and paper to illustrate your point. Body language can also clarify matters. What matters is the communication of your intended message. Check that you have been successful in this.

General Background Information

Communication: The verbal or non-verbal transfer of messages between two or more people.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are: contact, talking, message, goal, transfer, between people, interaction, non-verbal and verbal, body language.

Staff are often far more aware of the fact that they are being talked about than we realise.

The limitations of mentally handicapped staff would sometimes seem to suggest that they will not understand that they are being talked about. For example, where a group is making jokes about a member of staff without referring to him explicitly, he is usually very well aware that he is the butt of the joke. In general, we are not always aware of the effect that a certain remark has on someone and the emotions that this can bring about in them.

As a supervisor, it is important to know exactly which remarks you can and cannot make in the presence of your staff. The supervisor is also responsible for making staff aware of this (where possible). The supervisor could choose to do this during group meetings or individual meetings, in which one of the topics being discussed is how staff feel when they are being talked about.

Tips for the Supervisor

How should a supervisor talk about an employee when the employee in question is present?

- Set a good example.
- Do not pull rank too emphatically. Be aware of the inequality of power that exists between you and your staff.

- Take your staff's emotions into account. They may not understand your joke, but could be affected by the response your joke enjoys from others.
- Remember that staff are often able to follow a conversation better than you realise and follow everything that you say about them.
- Always ask yourself whether your own behaviour is appropriate in the situation in question.
- WHAT you say is just as important as HOW you say it.
- Express yourself in clear terms.

Theme 3

Aggression

Case

Aggression on the workforce between two members of staff with an intellectual disability

For several weeks now, a certain amount of tension has been evident between Hans and Ans, who are constantly making negative remarks about each other. Bart has already intervened on a number of occasions and spoke to them last week when it emerged that jealousy was chiefly to blame: Hans is allowed to work unsupervised, whereas Ans receives far more supervision.

Today, Hans and Ans are constantly at loggerheads again, when, suddenly, Hans hits Ans across the head, and a fight breaks out between the two of them. Bart, who had briefly left the group, now returns, completely unaware of what is happening. Hans and Ans are still fighting and are out of control. The fight continues and Bart has no alternative but to separate them. Hans now has a wound to the head and Ans has lost several front teeth. It is clear that Hans and Ans will not be able to work together again unless something is done.

Specific Background Information

How do people with an intellectual disability cope with aggression?

When discussing the subject of aggression in people with an intellectual disability, it is often assumed that aggression originates from the person with the intellectual disability (challenging behaviour). However, people (intellectual disabled or otherwise) often respond to aggression with aggression. This might be the case where a conversation between two members of staff deteriorates into verbal aggression (swearing and screaming), or where a scene from a film contains a lot of physical and/or verbal violence.

It is important for people in your position to know how people with an intellectual disability experience aggression. Each employee is an individual, so each member of the group will respond differently to a certain situation. One will creep into a corner, terrified, after seeing a violent scene from a film, and refuse to come out. Another will become very upset after hearing an aggressive interchange. In a third individual, raised voices or a sudden movement may bring back memories of his own experiences and possibly provoke aggressive behaviour. In each of these cases, the sense of safety and structure so important to the employee disappears, completely and out of the blue. Safety and structure are two factors that have a great impact on the performance in a group of a person with an intellectual disability. They need fixed daily routines, fixed activities and fixed rituals. If any of this suddenly changes for no reason (in their eyes), they can lose all trust in their environment.

So, it is important to take this into account and to re-establish trust, safety and structure as quickly as possible. For example, try to make group members understand that when someone airs their aggression it is not aimed at them, and try to reassure them.

General Background Information

Aggression: A form of emotional release resulting from frustration and/or powerlessness, with a certain aim. Aggression may involve causing deliberate damage to objects and/or injury to other people.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are: emotion, release, anger, rage, frustration, powerlessness, expressing one's sense of powerlessness, threat, behaviour, causing damage or injury, extreme, attention, external influences and causes.

Aggression is often a way of imposing your will on someone else and the result of a lack of other verbal options. People are

more likely to respond with aggressive behaviour where jealousy is involved or emotions that are difficult to respond to verbally. Aggression may manifest itself in different ways, depending greatly on the person in question. For example, some people very quickly adopt an aggressive stance, which they might manifest by swearing and through physical violence. They do not want to hold back their anger and will not feel that they are being aggressive or that their behaviour is problematic.

However, others bottle up their frustrations and only explode when it is really already too late. The aggression that they manifest at times such as this is often completely unrelated to the reason for their aggressive behaviour, and has a far deeper cause. Often, these people will need more help to express their emotions and frustrations properly, without bottling them up.

Tips for the Supervisor

How should the supervisor respond to aggression on the workflow?

- Be aware that your attitude can provoke aggression.
- Be ahead of the situation and be alert to the signs of frustration, jealousy and powerlessness.
- Diffuse tension with a different activity or humour.
- Make a distinction between anger and aggression.
- Avoid remarks that could cause a situation to escalate.
- Choose the role of ally or mediator. Be sure to remain impartial. The point is not who is right, but to restore peace in the group, so that a sense of safety returns and everyone can get back to their work.
- Continue to ask the member of staff in question to adopt a different attitude, making it possible to diffuse the situation.
- Constantly point out the effect of aggression on the people around the aggressor(s).

- Give the impression that you have a plan. Although you might not know what to do, assume a steering role.
- Do not ask any difficult or “soft” questions (for example, “How do you feel now?”, or “Are you really angry”). This often only provokes more aggression.
- Be alert to verbal and non-verbal signs. What are staff sensitive to, on the one hand, and indifferent to, on the other?
- Practise the use of body language: breath calmly, assume a relaxed posture, maintain distance or closeness.
- Try to win a respite (remember that aggression is often used to exact a certain result). When a situation has ended, you can still always look for a resolution together.
- Set boundaries. Do not accept certain behaviour from a member of staff just because he is angry.
- Help members of staff to respect these boundaries.
- Verbalise your own fear in an ‘I’ message. By expressing your own fear, staff are confronted with their own attitude.
- Keep a grip on the situation. Do everything possible to stop the situation from escalating.
- Do not be a hero. Your own safety and that of your staff is paramount.
- Remember that there is no shame in asking colleagues for help.

Theme 4

Physical Contact

Case

Responding to physical contact from people with an intellectual disability

Hans works as a gardener. He always tries to get his colleagues' attention by grabbing them, for example pulling on their sleeves or prodding their shoulders. Bart and his colleagues find this very unpleasant and aggressive.

Specific Background Information

How do people with an intellectual disability view physical contact?

Physical contact in people with an intellectual disability can be regarded as essential. Most people with an intellectual disability find it difficult to express their feelings verbally and are more inclined to express their feelings physically. They need physical contact to experience a sense of safety, security and protection. It is important to realise that the way in which people with an intellectual disability express their feelings does not always correspond with the way 'normal' people communicate the way they feel. For example, where a member of staff is constantly fiddling with a supervisor (touching, pushing or pulling on him) this is not necessarily meant aggressively. Nor does it mean that the employee is expressing his dissatisfaction with the supervisor in question. It could also be another way of asking for some attention. It may indicate the person's need for a quick hug or pat on the back. As a supervisor it is good to be aware of your own limits in terms of physical contact, but also of the employee's limits and those acceptable according to the norms and values that form part of our society. When you are aware of your own limits, it becomes easier for you to understand the employee's limits. You have a better understanding of a member of staff's particular emotional needs and of how or whether you, as his supervisor, can meet these needs.

General Background Information

Physical contact: Reciprocal physical communication between two or more people. A certain response may be evoked in each of those involved.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are: touch, pleasant/unpleasant, relationship, interaction, feelings, wanted/unwanted, necessary, touchable, closeness, stroking, cuddling, pushing and pulling.

For a certain group of people with an intellectual disability, physical contact is very important. They use it as a way of showing that they are there. For them it is the most normal way of establishing contact and may involve hugging and kissing but also various other types of physical contact. Playing around, pushing, pulling, patting the back, a hand on the shoulder, etc. Physical contact is a way of offering emotional safety, particularly where combined with eye contact.

A sense of self-confidence can be created simply by being relaxed and at ease with each other, making it easier for staff to establish contact with others.

Tips for the Supervisor

On the workfloor, how should a supervisor respond to physical contact from people with an intellectual disability?

- Set a good example in terms of your response to physical contact.
- Realise that physical contact is essential.
- During (group) meetings talk to group members about physical contact and make it clear that they must let people know what their limits are.
- Try to restrict excessive forms of physical contact.

- Try to see physical contact as a way of asking for attention. Ask the member of staff in question what he wants.

Theme 5

Sexuality

Case

On the workforce, dealing with sexuality in people with an intellectual disability

Hans and Ans are two young people working in a shop as part of a project. Their colleagues also have an intellectual disability. Hans and Ans are both very enthusiastic people and extremely physical.

Despite Bart's presence in the shop, Hans and Ans are not constantly under his supervision.

While working, Hans and Ans make jokes and occasionally touch, but not really sexually. One day, Hans suddenly grabs Ans by her breasts. Ans laughs and does not really seem at all bothered by the experience.

Specific Background Information

How do people with an intellectual disability view sexuality?

Sexual development is usually delayed in people with an intellectual disability. They have not always been informed about sex and intimacy and are not aware of what this might entail. Dirty jokes, smutty talk, kissing or cuddling may lead to sniggering, shouting or boasting about sex.

Some things are forbidden, for example playing with yourself and experiencing an enjoyable sensation, or (inconspicuously) touching someone of the other sex.

General Background Information

Sexuality: sexual intercourse and everything related to it.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are:

touching, pleasant/unpleasant, relationship, interaction, sensation, wanted/unwanted, necessary, touchable, closeness.

Sexuality is important for people with an intellectual disability. They use it to show others that they care about them and view it as a sign that others care about them. For people with an intellectual disability, the clearest way of showing this is physical contact and so does not always need to be intended sexually. This might be the case where a member of staff constantly wants to kiss others. Their inadequate awareness of what touching means to someone else can cause them to transcend what we consider 'normal' norms and values.

Tips for the Supervisor

How should the supervisor deal with the sexuality of people with an intellectual disability on the workforce?

- Try to explain to staff exactly when touching, kissing and stroking, etc. are appropriate and when they are not.
- Be aware of your staff's limits. Is an individual able to make decisions on his sexuality, or does he need a helping hand? Is he able to stand up for himself?
- Encourage staff to express their feelings. Give them the opportunity to express themselves about situations that occur, taking into account their individual limits. Compliment them for making their own decisions, but do indicate whether or not these are appropriate within the norms and values (behavioural rules) that form part of our culture.
- Evaluate situations with your staff and ask them how they felt in a particular situation. Make it clear that their opinions count too.

Theme 6

Independence

Case

Promotion of independence in someone with an intellectual disability

Hans is a young man in his early twenties, who has an intellectual disability. He works in a group where a permanent supervisor is always present.

One day, two students are being shown around and Hans is allowed to explain to them exactly what kind of work he and the others are doing. Hans talks about the daily routine and also gives the students the opportunity to ask questions. One of the students asks a question that Hans is unable to answer and the supervisor decides to jump in and answer the question for him. After answering the question, he takes over the conversation and Hans is not given the opportunity to finish what he was talking about or continue showing the students around. When the students have gone, Hans remains behind in the workshop, a little sad.

Specific Background Information

Assertiveness is a tool that can be used to increase or promote someone's independence. The same applies to people with a handicap. The degree to which they are assertive is related to their upbringing and also to development at a later age. Assertiveness can also be learnt, through courses (some intended specifically for people with an intellectual disability), but also under supervision from the network. Courses are available at different levels. Learning to set limits basically involves learning to say 'no'. Saying 'no' to something that you do not want to do or do not find enjoyable. At a higher level, attention can be paid to teaching people when and how best to be assertive. This might be by encouraging staff to start their sentences with "I think" instead of "You do", but also by teaching them not to resort to a personal attack where they do not agree to something, but, instead, to call the person to account for their behaviour. This

higher level will not be possible for everyone with an intellectual disability.

General Background Information

Independence: Taking responsibility for the choices that you make and the consequences resulting from them.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are:

Self-sufficiency, responsibility, independence, alone, without help, choices.

In our discussion of this theme, we have particularly focused on the question of assertiveness. Assertiveness is nothing more than standing up for yourself without hurting others.

Being assertive means standing up for your personal interests, expressing (and voicing) your feelings, thoughts and wishes in an appropriate manner and daring to say what you think, feel and want, on the basis of respect for your own interests and those of others.

People can be taught to stand up for themselves, but to do so must be aware of their own wishes and needs.

Tips for the Supervisor

How can a supervisor take a back seat professionally and to such an extent that the independence of someone with an intellectual disability is promoted?

- Be aware of your position as supervisor. You guide your staff in their work, but are also an important factor in their personal development as a mentally handicapped individual. They view you as their leader at work and, as such, in everything that happens at work. In a situation similar to the example given above, they will not take the initiative to pick up the conversation again, unless you

have taught them that they are allowed to and are able to do that.

- Give staff the opportunity to express the way they feel, in the right place, to the right person and at the right time. Help staff to express the way they feel on the workfloor and to speak out if they do not agree with something.
- Be aware of the limits of individual members of staff. You often know them best, so use this knowledge in all situations. Ascertain whether a particular member of staff is able to stand up for himself and whether or not he would. What do your staff need to be able to express themselves? Do they simply need some encouragement, or will they really need to be urged on?
- Evaluate situations with your staff and ask them how they feel in individual situations. If you were unable to urge an individual member of staff on to express himself during a particular situation or, in hindsight, you feel that you left far too little to the member of staff in question, discuss this with him. Ask him how he felt about you taking over the situation and how this could be approached differently in the future. Agree together on what is necessary to ensure that he gains more independence and responsibility.
- Be open to feedback, enabling you to set a good example, for your staff and colleagues alike.

Theme 7

Resilience

Case

Resilience and influencing people with an intellectual disability

Ans is a young woman who has been working in a launderette for a number of weeks. When she started at the launderette, Ans was a modest woman, who dressed conservatively. After several weeks, Ans started to wear clothes that were increasingly provocative and to wear heavy make-up. She had more and more contact with Sjan, who herself likes to wear provocative clothes and enjoys flirting with the men in the group. Ans too is becoming increasingly interested in the men in the group, who, in turn, are becoming increasingly aware of her presence.

Bart has spoken to Ans about the situation. She found it difficult to explain exactly why she had decided to change and did not appear to be at ease in her new role. She was also asked about her friendship with Sjan, but said that Sjan had not had any influence on her new choice of clothes and behaviour. Ans' parents have asked Bart to intervene. They are afraid that the men in the group want to abuse Ans' vulnerability

Specific Background Information

How can someone with an intellectual disability prevent others from abusing their vulnerability and learn to adopt a more resilient attitude?

People with an intellectual disability can be taught to stand up for themselves via numerous courses and brochures (see, for example, the brochure published by the SPD (social services for the handicapped). This is specifically geared towards people with an intellectual disability).

In addition, people forming part of the network of individuals with an intellectual disability can learn to stand up for themselves by making it clear that they are also important and

that their opinions count too. Respect is also involved in this process. Where the choices made by mentally handicapped individuals are respected, they will feel good about themselves and their choices. The positive feeling that these individuals have about themselves removes any need for self-doubt, leaving them confident and able to stand up for their opinions. Of course, it is important that supervisors, parents and carers make sure that the choices made by these individuals are appropriate in terms of the norms and values (behavioural rules) that are part of our culture. Where this does not happen, the mentally handicapped individual may run into difficulties or end up in trouble with the police.

General Background Information

Resilience: Standing up for your personal interests and being able to indicate your own limits.

A number of key words relevant to this theme are: standing up for yourself, saying 'no', saying 'yes', vulnerability, giving as good as you get, independent, own opinion, decision, limits, appropriate.

What is resilience? If you are resilient, you do not simply allow yourself to become a victim. For example, you do not allow someone to speak to you in a way that is offensive. Nor do you allow someone to touch you in a way that you do not like. You know what you do and do not want. However, resilience also means being able to ask for help when something goes wrong or does not go as you had expected. You are also able to recognise signs in yourself and in others (the way someone responds when they do not want something or do not like something) and know how to respond to them. You know how to indicate your limits and how to stand up for yourself. This all sounds very easy, but may not be, particularly if you have never had any practice. Being clear, indicating your limits,

learning to find out what other people's limits are and to ask for help are all things that you can learn.

Tips for the Supervisor

How should a supervisor approach the problem of resilience in someone with an intellectual disability and draw their attention to their role in its development?

- Respect your staff's choices. They are entitled to lead their own lives within the framework of the norms and values (behavioural rules) that form part of our culture. However, do check that they are actually happy with the lives they are leading.
- Be aware of the limits of individual members of staff. Are they able to make life-changing decisions themselves or do they need a helping hand? Is they able to stand up for themselves?
- Encourage staff to express their feelings and be themselves. Give them the opportunity to express themselves about situations that occur, taking into account their individual limits. Compliment them for making their own decisions, but do indicate whether or not these are appropriate according to the norms and values (behavioural rules) that form part of our culture.
- Evaluate situations with staff, asking them how they felt in particular situations. Make it clear that their opinions count.