



GOOD PRACTICE IRELAND

Abbott

Contact person (NCO)

Name and organisation

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General information about the MOGP

Name of organisation and short description

The Abbott Ireland Vascular Division employs a total of almost 4,000 people across its manufacturing sites and commercial operations throughout Ireland. The division in Clonmel manufactures a broad range of vascular devices which includes vessel closure, endovascular and coronary technologies that are used to treat cardiovascular diseases.

Contact person

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Website

www.abbott.ie



Information on the good practice “Employment programme for graduates with disabilities & Occupational Health programme”

Aims

- To recruit employees with disabilities;
- To recruit new and talented employees for the company;
- To create an accessible work environment for all employees;
- To reduce absenteeism due to illness and help prevent permanent withdrawal from work.

Target group

- Recruitment of graduates with disabilities: graduates with technical qualifications (e.g. in science, engineering).
- Job retention and Return to Work: the target group consists of all employees who have a disability or illness that impacts upon their work.

Description

- 1) Health promotion at the workplace: a number of programmes have been initiated, including a well-equipped gym on site, a sports and social club, smoking cessation programmes, health screening, dissemination of health information about chronic illnesses via posters and leaflets, a 1 kilometre health walk around the grounds of the site... The Occupational Health Department is used for this kind of general health promotion.
- 2) Recruitment of people with disabilities
The WAM programme ‘Willing Able Mentoring’ in collaboration with AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability) places graduates with disabilities in six months paid and mentored work placements within participating employer organisations.

Between 40 and 50 graduates have been placed with Abbott Vascular since the company engaged with the programme in 2007. Approximately 6 of these have been recruited into permanent positions following their 6 months placement and a further interview, depending on the business need for employees at the time.

- 3) Early intervention and case management
Abbott Vascular’s Occupational Health Department consists of one part-time and two full-time onsite Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs), and an occupational health physician in a local centre. Their role is to work with employees who have a disability or chronic illness to accommodate their needs in the work environment, speed up their return to work, and help them remain in employment.

The approach used stipulates that if an employee is out sick for 5 days and has not engaged with the OSH department, they are notified by their manager / supervisor to make contact. Professionals in the OSH department liaise and coordinate with supervisors / managers within the various operations departments.



The nurses work with the employee with a disability/chronic illness on an on-going basis, thus providing tailored and sustained support. If an accommodation made within the employee's own department of work is not successful the case is then accelerated up to an operations manager who will subsequently engage and work with other departments to accommodate the person.

4) Self-management of the worker with disability

Employees are aware that the Occupational Health Department is a drop-in service and that they should utilise the department if they are having health issues that are causing them difficulty at work. The employees themselves are expected to initiate contact with the OHN staff.

Why is it a good practice?

- There is a clear strategy and structured approach evident for the employment of graduates with disabilities. Innovative is that employees with disabilities are not viewed or treated as separate from the rest of the workforce, but are fully integrated into the department.
- The onsite Occupational Health Nurses support employees with chronic illnesses and allow the company to accommodate their needs by making special adaptations in the work environment, by adapting the employee's role, or accommodating additional time off work if this is required (e.g. for an employee who requires kidney dialysis).
- O2 Ability Award 2010: Abbott Ireland Vascular was the overall winner in the Private Sector category for supporting people with disabilities and other diverse needs at the workplace.

Results

Evaluation

Recruiting graduates with disabilities programme

Monitoring involves a quarterly review of the company's activities: reviewing how many people were recruited into the programme, which areas they were assigned to within the company, and how things have worked out in general. The company Vice President and the 'Able Team' are involved in these reviews. There is no formal evaluation of the programme.

Occupational Health Department

What can be said is that the OH Nurse function works best in marginal cases, i.e. in reducing short-term absenteeism due to illness, for example, from 2 weeks to one week.

However, where an employee on long-term income protection is trying to return to work following a review of their long-term income protection payments by the insurance company, the disabilities programme is effective. This situation has arisen four times and in two of these cases, the employees were able to return to work successfully.



Incentives for success

The company offers additional training for employees with a health issue or a disability, which will help them to overcome a specific problem in relation to carrying out their work tasks. Also, if moving to a new department can accommodate an employee's disability but he / she doesn't have the necessary qualifications to fulfil that role, the company will fully fund third-level education for that employee.

The legislative background was also a factor – the company wanted to set up a programme in the area of disability that would act against discrimination.

Barriers for success

The consequences of the economic crisis have impacted upon the employability of workers with a chronic illness. The main barrier identified is the disincentive effect on potential unskilled employees with disabilities as a result of losing social welfare payments when they take up employment. When the initiative was first developed it targeted unskilled workers, but this disincentive became a barrier that could not be overcome. As a result, the initiative had to change focus and target graduates with disabilities instead.

