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Office role an ideal start to kicking work goals

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THE social interaction and communication skills developed while working in an administration role make it an ideal workforce introduction for many young people. But for those with disabilities, in particular, administrative work can also help bring out their best to make an important contribution to the workforce.

Disability work provider Personnel Employment executive manager Craig Harrison says all young people - not just workers with a disability - are more likely to lose a job through poor social skills than an inability to perform designated tasks. He says learning communication and social skills on the job in administration gives young workers a kickstart to their career. "Most young people move into (their first) role where there is direct supervision and, for someone with a disability, it's no different," he says.

"Those individuals develop the skills that those tasks require and develop safe work practices."

Personnel Employment is part of Barkuma Inc, which provides services to people with a disability.

Mr Harrison says another advantage of an administrative role is the regular interaction workers have with their superiors.

"There are many unwritten rules of engagement in every workplace and they're not all the same," he says. "Young workers, they don't

ADMIN SKILLS

Office work can provide young workers with:

- Advice on how to work safely and efficiently.
- Understanding of workplace etiquette and procedures.
- Experience in communicating with supervisors, colleagues and customers.
- Reinforcement of their self-worth.

always understand it when they first start work.

"In our community, what you do by way of participating in the labour market is a very important, socially valued thing."

As well as understanding the etiquette of a workplace, workers with a disability can greatly benefit in other social situations by having a job.

Jacob Milbank has developed his social and communication skills since he started his administration job with the Adelaide Football Club six months ago.

Barkuma employment co-ordination manager Liz Hillyer says Jacob's job was created for a worker with a disability through a partnership between the club, disability support organisation Foundation 21 and Personnel Employment.

Foundation 21 had an unpaid work experience offer with the club. With the help of Barkuma, it was converted into paid adminis-



Jacob Milbank at work at Adelaide Football Club, West Lakes. Picture: NIGEL PARSONS

tration work. "He's had a long-term passion for football," Ms Hillyer says. "It was just a match made well. It certainly increases his social networks and increases his own self-esteem by having a real job and being seen as contributing back to society."

Jacob started working eight hours a week but, because of his success, the role will be increased to 12 hours a week.

His work includes delivering newspapers and mail to all the offices, assisting the various managers during training sessions, tidying and cleaning office equipment and other one-off administrative

duties. Ms Hillyer says the football club role provided Jacob with not only a work outlet but a social outlet as well. "It's just endless, the amount of opportunities it gives him," she says.

Mr Harrison says it is particularly useful for Jacob because in many conversations with a new acquaintance, the first topic that comes up is what he does for a living.

"By getting access to the labour market and being a valued employee to your boss and a valued colleague to your co-workers, it reinforces your own personal sense of self-esteem and personal sense of worth," he says.