Advice on how to onboard new employees when working from home

To welcome a new colleague by being physically present is of course the best way to ensure that the new colleague is onboarded in a good and personal way. It is therefore a special challenge to onboard new colleagues during this time when we are all present in virtual rooms instead of physical rooms. The first days can however be planned for the new colleague, so the challenges will be as small as possible.

On the website [’Onboarding – the final step in a successful recruitment’](https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/hr/recruitmentandonboarding/onboarding/), you can read more about the characteristics of a good onboarding process and you can find useful tools. Below, you can see some of the elements which you as a manager must focus particularly on when onboarding a new employee during this time.

**Close dialogue and clear expectations**In this situation, it is particularly important that you as a manager are in close dialogue with the new colleague regularly. In addition to introducing the new colleague to the organisation, the department’s goals and other things which you would usually do, you must make your expectations clear to the new colleague in this situation. It is also important to be clear about what you do *not* expect the new colleague to do in the current situation. This balancing of expectations is particularly important because the new colleague may otherwise become frustrated and unsure about what to do/not to do.

**Create a framework for an introduction to the professional as well as the social aspects of the job**As a new employee, it can be difficult to become a part of the department/unit/team if you only ‘meet’ your colleagues at a virtual department/team meeting once a week. Therefore, as a manager, you must try to establish a social safety net and a virtual framework, which can support the integration of the new colleague.

Introduction to the professional aspects of the job   
It is important that the new colleague can start to work on the unit’s tasks from the beginning. This may be particularly challenging at present when the days at work are quite different. You should therefore consider this in the onboarding process and ensure that the tasks the new employee should solve first can be solved remotely and be adjusted to a situation where we are all working from home. In addition, it is important to find the right balance in the number of tasks - so the new employee does not have to solve too many or too few tasks.   
Task performance may be challenged by the fact that the new colleague does not know the people he/she will be collaborating with and will not be able to meet with them personally. As a manager, you must therefore remember to help your new employee by ‘opening doors’ and helping the new employee establish contact to relevant people in the organisation.

If a mentor has not been assigned to help the new colleague settle in professionally, such a mentor should be assigned. This mentor should introduce the new colleague to the tasks and job functions and be the new colleague’s sparring partner during the first few months. In the current situation, it is particularly important that the mentor is in close dialogue with the new colleague regularly. Please make sure that the mentor has the time to take on this role.

Introduction to the social aspects of the job   
A virtual department/unit meeting should be set up shortly after the new colleague has joined the department/unit. This should be a social meeting where the team members introduce themselves, not just their job functions, but also who they are personally. Even though this may seem a bit strange, it is extremely important in order to make the new colleague feel at home. This meeting should be followed by individual coffee meetings. By holding these meetings virtually, you will ‘meet’ in private homes which may be a shortcut to creating a more informal conversation and build a relation. It is also important to support the colleagues in the department/unit so they take responsibility as colleagues and remember to contact and include the new colleague. It may also be a good idea to encourage the colleagues to invite the new colleague to a virtual lunch or cup of coffee.

If a buddy has not been assigned to help the new colleague settle in, a buddy should be assigned. In this situation, a buddy can be quite helpful and offer a shortcut into more knowledge about the organisation’s and the department’s/unit’s professional and social culture as well as unwritten rules. In this situation, a buddy can also become a trusted colleague who can listen and help the new colleague with some of the special challenges, the new colleague may experience.

The saying ‘out of sight, out of mind’ is very accurate in connection with virtual collaboration where the new colleague can easily be forgotten. Therefore, it is important that you and everyone in the department/unit/team make an extra effort and are more present online. You must invite the new colleague to take part in the social activities that take place online in order to make the new colleague an active part of the virtual interaction.