

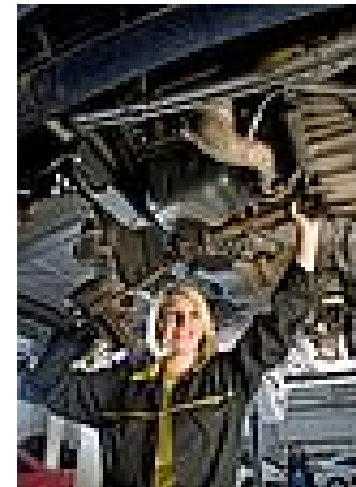
Raising standards, improving lives

The Future of Apprenticeships Conference

Learning from the best:
examples of best practice from
providers of apprenticeships in
underperforming vocational
areas

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7 April 2011



Rationale



- This good practice report examines the work of 39 providers of work-based learning, including independent learning providers, employer providers and colleges
- These have been successful in providing apprenticeships in three currently underperforming vocational areas: **hospitality, motor vehicle, and retail**; and two historically underperforming areas that have improved to the national average in recent years: **care and construction**
- The report describes the factors which contributed to sustaining high numbers, or increasing the numbers, of apprentices completing their qualifications, and to improving the time taken for them to do this
- The overall proportion of apprentices who successfully completed their frameworks rose from **49% in 2005–06 to 71% in 2008–09 (and to 73.8% by the end of 2009-10)**

The key success factors



- Recruitment and selection of apprentices
- Initial assessment and the individual learning plan
- Induction by the employer and the training provider
- On- and off-the-job training
- Practical and theory training
- Key skills
- Support
- Assessment and the engagement of employers
- Progress reviews and setting targets
 - Different types of review
 - Setting targets for learners
 - Using data to manage assessors effectively

Recruitment and selection of apprentices



- Methods of recruitment varied with no one way proving 'best'
- larger national construction and motor vehicle employers set higher entry qualifications and used online applications (high numbers of applicants)
- shorter distances travelled by apprentices to work helped improve retention
- colleges and work-based learning providers set lower entry qualifications and had fewer applicants for the number of places available
- young people progressing to apprenticeships from 14–16-year-old 'link' courses more successful in terms of progress and completion, than those who started straight from school
- good IAG at recruitment events or interviews had a positive impact on recruiting learners into the appropriate area, also work tasters and trial periods with supportive employers, several examples of pre-entry training programmes
- four of the seven colleges in the survey had become more flexible in allowing transfers between full-time, college-based courses and apprenticeships, and vice versa, helping to keep learners in training

Initial assessment and the ILP



- wide range of assessments included literacy, numeracy and sometimes language-screening tests; dyslexia; also diagnostic testing of key skills, as well as recording of proxy qualifications and exemptions for key skills. Evidence of proxy qualifications *early on* allowed more effective planning of training for the key skills component from the start (learning styles often assessed but not effectively used)
- most effective initial assessment shared results with learners, training staff and employers early, ensuring planned training and support
- just under half of the providers extended their initial assessment to include an evaluation of each new learner's job role to plan for assessments
- the best ILPs were documents that developed over time and reflected the circumstances of each apprentice setting key milestones and recording progress in reaching them. They identified support required and how it would be provided. They were designed to be 'live' documents
- Some of the best ILPs included extra targets set by the employer

Induction by the employer and the training provider



- employers inductions often over several weeks, with a mentor (trainer/manager) or buddy (experienced or ex-learner)
- some larger retail and hospitality employers provided general training to all new employees with the most motivated offered the chance to begin an apprenticeship
- providers had structured inductions that introduced the NVQ and assessment procedures, included introductory key skills assignments that engaged apprentices with relevant tasks, helping them to see the relevance of key skills.
- participative learning methods, such as apprentices researching topics and giving presentations to their peers, helped to make inductions interesting and effective
- inductions tend to be group rather than individual. Providers with induction resources specifically for late starters gave shorter but still effective induction and evidenced that this had helped to improve the retention of later starters compared to previous years. Extended inductions used by some providers to match learners to right training

On- and off-the-job training



- varying mixture of on- and off-the-job training and assessment - retail and hospitality having a higher proportion of on-the-job training and assessment
- in construction, hospitality and motor vehicle (and to a lesser extent in care), off-the-job training was usually involved, allowing groups of learners to have specialist input (block release, day release & workshops)
- where delivery included both on- and off-the-job training, the two were linked so that they complemented each other. The providers in the survey had worked extremely hard to become engaged with their employers
- a flexible off-the-job training programme with several possible starting points was the model most providers were working towards. Most apprentices started training in the summer, several providers who operated flexibly felt that later starters were often less likely to succeed. Most tried to start another group to overcome this - less of a problem where employers provided their own training, particularly in hospitality and retail, as programmes were tailored to individuals rather than groups of apprentices

Practical and theory training



- apprentices gain elements of practical and theory training at work by virtue of doing their jobs; better performance influenced by linking this well to the requirements of the NVQ, key skills and technical certificates
- employers used manufacturers to provide an element of specialist training that provided breadth of knowledge beyond the needs of the NVQ
- providers put a lot of effort into recruiting trainers who were skilled and experienced staff from industry. They kept themselves up-to-date, often undertaking placements with employers or manufacturers
- planning provision for the whole apprenticeship and sharing planning with employers to enable them to support learning through on-the-job activities paid dividends in skills development and engaging employers
- providing practical and theory training in teams, to make the best use of specialist practical skills and knowledge of staff worked particularly well
- encouraging questions and involving learners in discussions by sharing their experiences in the workplace. Using different methods of checking learning so that no-one got left behind
- offering online or paper testing supported by revision activities so that apprentices could choose what suited them best

Key skills



- poor delivery a major contributory factor to poor success rates in recent years
- introduced at induction, made interesting and relevant by placing the NVQ and key skills training together, avoiding unnecessary duplication
- several large employers subcontracted key skills training, subcontractors worked with employers to ensure that the skills were taught in a relevant way
- many staff gained key skills qualifications themselves in order to better understand potential problems that their apprentices might encounter
- common feature of good teaching was vocational relevance
- online testing a positive change, enjoyed by apprentices The instant feedback on performance was motivating, and helped to identify the areas they needed to work on if they failed
- many apprentices exempt from taking key skills tests because of proxy GCSE qualifications completed key skills portfolios enthusiastically and a minority took higher-level qualifications

Support



- improvements in support a key factor in improving success rates
- learning support mostly for literacy and numeracy difficulties, data showed that apprentices with additional learning needs who received support performed **as well as or better than those without such needs**
- although 2/3 of the providers in the survey had a considerable number of learners (10% or above) who needed support and could show how it was being given, it was not always recorded on or part of ILPs
- take-up of learning support improved if it was offered in the first few weeks of a programme and not given at lunchtimes or beyond the training day
- many good examples of support being given within group theory sessions, benefitting other learners
- assessors using dictaphones to capture authentic evidence for apprentices who had dyslexia (digital video also being used)
- many examples of personal support for problems with housing, alcohol and drugs misuse, mental and physical health problems (support prevented dropout)

Assessment and the engagement of employers



Historically inspection often cited a lack of work-based assessment as the main cause of poor overall and timely success rates. Engaging employers successfully is vital in overcoming this and improving success rates. Employer engagement strategies included:

- providing clear written guidance on apprenticeship frameworks
- sharing off-the-job training schedules to help them plan better to develop the employability skills of their apprentices
- altering aspects of provision or assessment to meet the needs of employers
- having regular pre-arranged visits to the workplace by provider's staff
- having continuity of staffing in the provider, working with an apprentice and the employer to help to build strong working relationships
- flexibility from the provider's staff in taking advantage of assessment opportunities in the workplace at short notice
- a requirement that the employer supports the apprentices
- establishing employer forums to encourage and support communication about training and to provide opportunities for other employers' apprentices

Progress reviews and setting targets 1

- a key factor in increasing timely success rates was regular and frequent contact between the staff of the provider and the employers. This focused on setting targets to provide work-based evidence to make sure that apprentices made progress against their ILP. In the provision visited, reviews were of two kinds. Both types of review occurred in the workplace and involved the apprentice, the training provider and the employer
 - target-setting reviews occurred every time an assessor visited the workplace (for many of the providers in the survey, this varied between weekly and monthly). These reviewed short-term targets, linked to assessment, which were contributing to meeting the longer-term targets of the ILP. The reviews gave clear guidance to the learner and employer, providing evidence for assessment
 - contractual monitoring reviews occurred at least every 12 weeks. These had a focus on progress, over a longer period, but also checked the welfare of the apprentice, while monitoring and reinforcing health and safety and equality of opportunity
- both types of review recorded discussions and updated the ILP

Progress reviews and setting targets 2



- quality of both types of review extremely varied, discussions not always captured well on the review documentation. Key points of best practice seen were:
 - paperwork used suitable with sufficient space to capture discussions and targets
 - training staff who conduct reviews understood their purpose fully
 - covering the purpose and value of reviews at induction (apprentices and employers)
 - updating ILPs so that everyone was aware of changes to planned completion dates
 - booking progress reviews in advance
 - holding reviews more frequently for apprentices who needed support
 - scheduling time in visits to complete review activities
 - having a reporting structure so reviewer understood the full performance of the apprentice enabling a well-informed review to take place
 - giving apprentices an overview of how far they had progressed through the apprenticeship framework, using a rough percentage
 - updating employers on the telephone or by email if they missed a review

Progress reviews and setting targets 3



Setting targets for learners

- the key to setting targets that apprentices referred to when completing tasks was agreeing them clearly with the apprentice, not just telling them what needed to be done
- apprentices were motivated by larger targets being broken down into smaller steps
- common to see a monthly action sheet in staff rooms. This helped others who might play some role in training to identify areas where they could help
- really successful assessors ensured that their apprentices did not work on too many units at once, as it could contribute to slowing progress and reducing their focus
- apprentices felt a sense of achievement in 'closing down' a unit
- successful assessors ensured that key employer staff knew what the apprentice needed to do before the assessor's next visit in order to support them
- apprentices were confident to contact their assessor between visits to check something they were unsure about

Progress reviews and setting targets 4



Using data to manage assessors effectively

- providers with high timely success rates used MIS effectively to monitor and manage apprentices' progress
- reports were generated monthly for managers to review assessors' productivity and apprentices' progress (reports showed what the apprentices had been achieved to date, that month and what was still to be completed)
- training managers met individual assessors each month to review targets
- traffic light systems showed when things were going well or in danger of going wrong (some extended this to employers)
- where underperformance was identified, action was swiftly taken, especially in the last few months of planned training. Action included arranging extra support, assessments or training

How can Ofsted help improve your provision?



Ofsted publishes a number of survey reports and has national advisers who liaise with key bodies in many areas of learning

The Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk carries inspection reports of work-based learning provision and has recently launched a new section highlighting examples of best practice identified as 'making a positive difference' during inspection, including videos <http://www.goodpractice.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Recent survey reports relating to this conference include:

Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning (100112), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100112

Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training (090227), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090227