

National Employer Service

Effective Practice: Developing Your Workforce

3. Delivering Key Skills

The NES Effective Practice Series:

This guide is one of a series commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency and developed by York Consulting LLP. The series is based on interviews with senior management, assessors, instructors and employees on training programmes in large, nationally recognised companies that receive Government funding for training through the LSC's National Employer Service (NES).

This series recognises the benefits to these companies of undertaking structured training programmes leading to externally recognised qualifications, and presents effective practice examples identified through delivering key programme elements.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily represent QIA's views.

About this Guide

Key Skills are a range of essential skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. Key Skills qualifications (Levels 1 – 4) are available in communication, application of number, information technology, working with others. improving own learning and performance and problem solving.

These are the skills that employers want all of their employees to possess.

Key Skills are an integral part of many training programmes that attract Government funding. This guide provides effective practice examples of imaginative and innovative delivery of Key Skills training.

Employers Featured in this Guide

Kwik Fit

Kwik Fit are experts in automotive repairs including tyres, exhausts and brakes. They serve around 7.5 million customers a year out of 570 centres nationwide. NVQ success rates are at almost 100%.

Robert Wiseman Dairies

Robert Wiseman Dairies are one of the leading suppliers and processors of dairy products in the United Kingdom.

Their completion and success rates on their programmes that receive some Government funding have shown significant improvement in recent years.

Vodafone

Vodafone is the largest mobile telecommunications network company in the world. Vodafone have around 600 apprentices at any one time, with framework completion rates of almost 80%.

Tesco

Tesco is the largest retailer operating in the United Kingdom and the third largest in the world.

At a recent Ofsted inspection their Apprenticeship programme and Train to Gain service were judged to be Good (Grade 2) in all six inspection areas.

Mimosa Healthcare

Mimosa Healthcare was established in 2000 to provide long-term care. Mimosa employs 2,300 staff across 29 care homes across the country. A recent Ofsted inspection was very positive, with the company receiving an overall grade 2.

TUI Travel UK

TUI Travel UK and Ireland is an international leisure travel company, operating in 180 countries and serving 30m customers. Completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks are higher than the national average.

Kwik Fit: Contextualised Key Skills Development

Developing Key Skills is not just an essential element of Kwik Fits' Fast-Fit Apprenticeship programme – the Key Skills programme is offered to all employees.

Kwik Fit has developed a number of assignments and projects directly related to the work their employees do to develop Key Skills and enable them to see their real world relevance. Assignments include:

“As a business, we don't want to have front line staff who don't have sufficient literacy and numeracy skills – it can't be good for our business. This is where the Business Case meets the People Case; we want to improve the business and by doing that we improve people too.”

Head of Training

Wheel Alignment

The Wheel Alignment task measures both literacy and numeracy skills; literacy skills are developed through discussions with customers and numeracy skills through calculating tyre pressures.

Employees gather the evidence within their centres and produce a story board to evidence the work that they have done. They write-up the effects of non-correction and produce graphs which are incorporated into the story board.

Statistical Sales Review

Employees produce a spreadsheet of the sales they have made during their NVQ training and calculate the revenue they have generated. The data is shown in pie charts and gives learners an understanding of where the majority of their sales come from. Learners then write-up an evaluation based on the statistics. This piece of work can be particularly interesting for employees as they earn a bonus depending on sales; this analysis can point them towards the areas they may want to concentrate on in the future.

Tesco : Flexibility in External Provision

Whilst it is common for Key Skills to be delivered externally, this is often through colleges or other traditional training providers.

Tesco has taken a slightly different approach, and have sub-contracted the delivery of the Key Skills element of their Retail Apprenticeship in-store through YMCA Training.

Whilst Tesco commits to ten basic skills lessons per apprentice, the YMCA has flexibility in how these lessons are delivered depending on the needs of the individual and the local context of each store.

Apprentices in Tameside commented on how they really enjoyed the imaginative ways that the YMCA taught Key Skills, such as delivering some of the lessons outside.

"Key Skills were made fun and were really beneficial for those of us who hadn't been to school for years." Former

Tesco Retail Apprentice

"It is really good to understand more about the company, and how your work fits in with that while you are learning. You don't even realise you are taking it in."

Vodafone employee

Vodafone: Delivering Key Skills to Improve the Understanding of the Business

Vodafone believe that employees find it easier to learn the skills when trainers put the information in a relevant and understandable context for them. Contextualised training also assists employees to improve their understanding of Vodafone, and how their work contributes to the targets, profit and the management of the business

For example, trainers will utilise Vodafone profit figures and call centre statistics to improve the Key Skills of learners. The trainers and learners state that this helps them to teach and learn the subjects, because they already understand and are interested in the information. It is contextual, and therefore, is relevant to them.

Mimosa: Early Completion of Key Skills and Technical Certificate

Initially, Mimosa encouraged learners to achieve the NVQ first and then tried to do the Key Skills and technical certificate. However, they found that people were not completing because they only focused on the NVQ. They therefore, swapped around the order with Key Skills being the first of the three elements delivered. This led to a significant improvement to their completion rate.

By turning this around and encouraging staff to do the Key Skills followed by the technical certificate, the NVQ became a reward for achieving the other elements. In addition, changing the order has had the benefit of ensuring that the learner started with the more manageable elements.

"A lot of our learners will be young men who have been failed by the education system. By making Key Skills work –orientated they can see how it is relevant, otherwise they would not be interested. They are reluctant learners in many ways; all they want to do is drive a truck. If learning isn't job specific their interest wanes."

NVQ Driver Training Programme Assessor

**Robert Wiseman Dairies:
Making Key Skills Work-Orientated**

By making Key Skills work-orientated the learners can see how it is relevant.

For example, the use of delivery notes from the previous day's work is used in the development of Application of Number.

TUI: On-Line Key Skills

Some employers are taking advantage of technology to help develop Key Skills.

For example, TUI offers a system called 'Profiler', an on-line Key Skills programme. Any employee can access the programme, but it is mandatory for all apprentices. Profiler consists of the following:

- initial assessment;
- diagnostic – checks against 35 different skill areas;
- following the diagnostic an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is produced for each subject;
- there are developmental "Skill Builders" and "Reassessments" which are problem-based and include a 'try-again' and "show me how" facility.
- it then offers apprentices a formal test. When this is completed the learner can take the Key Skills test.