

# Making the most of the QCF

## Case Study



### **Project title: Removing barriers to employment through QCF units and qualifications**

ATT formed in 2007 to provide a range of learning opportunities in the East of England. The provider secured a £2.3 million contract with the Skills Funding Agency in January 2012 to deliver Apprenticeships for 19-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This case study describes how the provider is using the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) to create personalised stepping-stones into employment and further learning, providing local employers with a source of new staff that has a mix of skills, knowledge and attributes tailored to their business – ensuring learners are “oven-ready” for deployment, both to start work and further a career.

### **Worth reading if you are interested in:**

- Employability
- Progression
- Leadership and management

### **Contact information**

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### **Participating organisation(s):**

ATT Limited, Berkeley House, Wendover Road, Norwich, NR13 6LH

### **What the provider set out to do and why**

The provider set out to match skilled staff to the immediate and future workforce needs of businesses in the East of England.

Where potential employees and current learners do not have the required skills, the provider utilises a mix of Government funding and employer contributions to select QCF units and qualifications to create stepping-stones that provide a pathway into employment. This approach to matching business needs with the supply of skilled staff has resulted in the provider creating new QCF units where required, including units on understanding the impact of construction on the environment, and moving from low-carbon to zero-carbon.

## **What has been achieved so far**

130 learners have embarked on a course since January 2012, with a 100% success rate for learners achieving QCF units. In addition, 30 learners achieved a full qualification (a Level 2 Certificate in Customer Service) and 54 learners progressed onto further educational programmes with ATT and its partners. 12 learners progressed to full time employment.

Initial assessment is undertaken with all learners, often commencing with a referral from Job Centre Plus staff and consisting of: a meeting and interview with an ATT Employment Broker; assessment of literacy and numeracy skills; and learner aspiration and information specific to the learner that may influence the delivery of teaching and learning (such as preferred learning style). Where the provider does not have approval to deliver an identified skill need, it obtains centre approval from the relevant awarding body and uses this to enhance its offer to employers. On the rare occasion where this has not been viable, referrals are made to local Further Education colleges or other private training providers.

The provider offers courses in key market towns and provides a mini-bus to help with transport, thus reducing the barrier of access to learning when delivering in a rural setting.

The provider is an approved centre for the same qualification with different awarding organisations. This provides a choice of assessment method to meet learner needs and allows the provider to compare awarding organisation costs and support.

### **Example of what employers say:**

A person originally referred by a Work Programme Provider to ATT completed a Customer Service Level 2 qualification and was then referred onto a retail work placement at Currys. Before the end of the first day, the manager phoned to say that when the placement finishes he wants to take her on full-time as “her customer service skills were fantastic”.

### **Overview from ATT**

*“Embracing one of the underlying principles of the QCF, flexibility, provides an opportunity to meet learners needs more effectively and has helped to reach a broader range of learners. Their subsequent achievements, and the accumulation of credit, have resulted in more people getting into work or progressing onto further educational programmes.”*

*(Paul Saunders, Business Development Director, ATT)*

## **What still needs to done**

The provider plans to increase the provision of these “stepping stone” programmes based on the requirements of the regional employment market and partners such as Job Centre Plus and Work Programme Providers. The strategic aim is to further establish its reputation of being an organisation that gets people into work utilising unitised training and delivery of qualifications as part of a process of meeting the needs of learners, employers and funding bodies.

## **Key learning points**

- Focusing on employment has helped the provider, and its staff, maintain a clear understanding of the purpose of any proposed learning. Although achievement of units and qualifications are celebrated and used as a management tool to monitor delivery, it is the progression into employment and further learning whilst employed that has become the priority indicator of success.
- The facility to offer units to unemployed people matching their skills gaps with employer skills needs (both specific to individual employers and from the market intelligence developed by Employment Brokers), has proven to be an effective pathway into employment. Small chunks of learning have provided learners with achievable targets and the potential to carry forward unit achievement through credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) has made the transition to further learning whilst employed a natural step.
- Planning for continued learning has been key to supporting learner progress once they have secured employment. For example, the delivery of QCF units in Customer Service to unemployed staff has helped them become more employable. Those that have secured employment by being matched by an Employment Broker have been able to use CAT to take forward their learning towards a Customer Service Apprenticeship framework.
- Having staff with excellent industry experience has been vital in building provider confidence when implementing and realising the benefits of the QCF – such as understanding CAT and being able to create new units. Experienced and skilled staff ensure that the provider sees the QCF as providing opportunities rather than challenges.
- Employment brokers get to know the learners, understanding what has led to them being unemployed and which skills gaps would have most impact on securing employment to locally-sourced vacancies.
- Establishing a professional working relationship with Job Centre Plus has been important, treating them as customers and ensuring they have up-to-date, accurate information on what is available through the provider.