

Traineeships – Supporting Learners with Learning Disability Statements

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Summary

This case study aims to bring together an overview of a traineeship programme and to focus on the learning and work experience of young people with learning disabilities on the programme.

Traineeships have been emerging as an option for people who have employment as a goal, but who are not currently ready, either academically or vocationally, to work on an Apprenticeship programme. The group of learners we support on this programme all have Learning Disability statements and have employment as a goal.

Key lessons learned

- Establishing the Traineeship model
- Exploring which learner groups can benefit from a Traineeship programme
- Reflecting on the experience of learners and the preparation for work

Introduction

About the Blueberry Academy

The Blueberry academy is based in York and runs a small, not for profit supported employment service. We work closely with employers and education providers and also run a range of in house work experience opportunities with higher levels of staff support. We are now delivering personalised learning in York and North Yorkshire and working with the Further Education (FE) sector to deliver bespoke learning packages.

What we wanted to achieve

The aim was to achieve a better understanding of what a traineeship programme can look like in practice for our learners and to establish a working model.

Implementation

Planning our approach

The approach was to create a working model to mirror Apprenticeship programmes at an appropriate level for each learner. This began by placing employment at the heart of the experience - finding good work experience placements that embed the right learning. Meeting the needs of the vocational learning necessitated some training and developing of staff which required us to assess the capacity to deliver learning. The vocational areas we have been able to deliver are: Sport and Active Leisure, Business Administration, Enterprise & Craft and Retail.

The aim was to get all learners established and on their programmes in the Summer term 2013.

What we did

Each learner we support works with their key worker to create a Traineeship timetable which includes work experience, vocational learning and functional skills. The work experience is facilitated through either our own supported employment opportunities or at offsite employer partners.

The learning is delivered through taught sessions which fit around the work placement, much like an Apprenticeship programme would. Our sessions are usually taught with a learner/staff ratio of about 3 or 4 to 1.

Our staff team have been truly enthused by the model we are developing. From a delivery perspective it brings the structure and framework of an Apprenticeship to entry level or level 1 programmes. The trainees have also embraced the programme, which has makes their learning more outcome focused and enhances the way the learning and work components are integrated.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

We have achieved putting together a series of timetables for 12 individuals to work towards a Traineeship. The learners have started their programmes and are integrating vocational skills and functional skills learning into their work experience programme.

What we learned

Traineeships have clear potential to bridge the gap between the classroom education experience and the world of work. The 'bottomless' approach to apprentice style learning means that young people can get real work experience while in the supportive environment of education and can be more prepared for adult working life.

The packaging together of the Traineeship programme feels like an easy process, though integrating supported employment and education has proved challenging in the past. The model we are developing feels like it should fit the new funding systems in September – though as a supported employment organisation and not a training provider, there is still likely to be some learning in this area.

What we are taking forward

The route forward will be to flesh out the programme and to integrate it into the learning landscape post September 2013. The vocational options also need to be finalised and we need

to continue to develop partnership working at an operational level on shared areas including quality and the evidence/accreditation process.

How we are sharing it

We are currently sharing our experience through the partners on the LSIS project and through the Connexions and Care Transitions teams. This will allow providers, supporters, parents and learners to understand the options available for work focused learning.

What advice we would give to others

Advice is difficult at this stage as we are just taking the steps into traineeships. However, it feels right that young people who are vocationally focused operating at level 1 and below can pursue a programme which mirrors the success of apprentice style provision.

Liam



Liam is 19 years old and was referred to the Blueberry Academy for work experience after leaving local Special School provision. Following assessment and partner guidance, he receives one to one support in his learning and work experience. He has a keen interest in ICT and in all aspects of how an office functions. His challenges are around keeping on the appropriate job tasks and to avoid distractions and to reduce the anxiety he feels in many everyday situations. His traineeship programme has office based work experience at its core, with 2 full days per week spent working in the Business Administration – creating easy read documents, engaging in marketing activities and performing reception and general admin duties. He has

completed an employability course as a front end to his traineeship which includes 3 hours per week of NVQ 1 in Business Administration and 3 hours of functional skills, where English and

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM	Functional Skills: Maths, English and ICT	Training: Customer Service & Business Admin level 1	Work Experience: Business Admin and Citizenship	Music Technology	
PM	Music	Work Experience: Business Admin and Citizenship	Work Experience: Business Admin and Citizenship		

maths skills are developed around Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and admin tasks. Liam is going to continue with his learning and work programme for probably another 12 months. He aims to progress to paid work and with ongoing support this is achievable. Liam will be supported to explore taking his learning further after he has completed his level 1 and will be given advice and guidance to select the best route for him.

Jon



Jon's experience on the programme so far has been a positive one. He had previously held a supported paid job for nearly four months as a cleaner, which ended in February. He found leaving this job very hard and it certainly knocked his confidence. While the job had some successes, there were also several areas where Jon found the work hard and not well matched to his skills. The traineeship programme with the front end of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and employment skills has helped identify areas of work which will match Jon's skills and interests. As the programme develops, if there is more clarity in

vocational direction, there is flexibility within the work experience structure for the programme to focus on either the sport or customer service.

Jon is 21 years old and working on a joint traineeship route in customer service and sports. He works in the community shop and is also part of the team running the accessible sports session for local people. He has a learning difficulty and physical and visual impairments, accessing job coach support focused on adjusting the tasks and support to make his learning accessible. Jon has paid employment as an aim and on-going IAG is delivered alongside the programme. This develops general employability skills and enables work on applications and CVs to fit around a timescale targeted at the progression from the traineeship. Having a planned progression date is useful to avoid the job seeking process being haphazard and counter-productive, which can happen. The programme for Jon has been designed around broadening his work experience and learning new vocational skills.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM	Functional Skills: Maths, English and ICT	Training: Customer Service	Work Experience: Jewsons	Work Experience: Accessible Sports	Work Experience: Community Centre
PM	Work Experience: Retail	Training: Sports Leader Award	Work Experience: Jewsons	Work Experience: Accessible Sports	Work Experience: Community Centre

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Provider name(s) Blueberry Academy

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