

Growing your Apprenticeship service provider workshops



Case study

**South West Region
Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER)
programme**

Audience

The content of this case study will be of interest to colleges and providers who are intending to grow their Apprenticeship provision or Train to Gain providers making the transition to delivering apprenticeships.

Background

Across the south west region 135 delegates representing 60 providers attended one of six 'Grow Your Apprenticeship' workshops as part of the LSIS funded Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme.

The providers represented colleges, private training providers, employer providers and adult and community providers and fell into one or more of four categories:

- already delivering Apprenticeships and looking to grow the provision, in line with the skills strategy;
- currently only delivering Train to Gain provision but intending to deliver Apprenticeships;
- small Apprenticeship provision intending to change their balance of provision to include more Apprenticeships;
- intending to utilise Train to Gain funding for Apprenticeships.

Most of them were looking for as much new information as possible to help them in a rapidly changing funding environment. They all wanted new approaches and tools to support the Apprenticeship growth strategy in the context of the region and their local area needs.

The intervention

The workshop content was developed to provide participants with as much information as possible on the current policy drivers impacting on Apprenticeships and regional and local needs, as well as supplying a range of strategies and tools to support providers to meet their Apprenticeship growth objectives.

Workshop objectives

To provide delegates with tools and strategies to:

Provider comments

“The workshop helped to clarify a number of issues for us but also has made us reconsider aspects of the major changes taking place and come at them from a different viewpoint. Listening to other people’s experiences and views is, of course, always useful and often very enlightening. So a worthwhile event overall!”

Lorraine Shearing, Managing Director, KTS Training Ltd

“The ‘Grow Your Apprenticeship’ workshop was delivered with practical, hands-on approach. The content was appropriate and relevant to the needs of the attendees – they were inspired and ready to rock and roll after the event. A great workshop delivered by two people with heaps of experience, a sense of humour and, of course, knowledge. Our employer engagement has increased and staff are more confident in talking to employers – the objective was met – the workshop has grown our Apprenticeships.”

Tim Keighley, Senior Director, Wiltshire Enterprise, Wiltshire College

- explore how Apprenticeship provision may be grown in the context of the current policy and economic and funding environment;
- identify areas for Apprenticeship growth and sustainability;
- consider strategies for growth in numbers and programmes;
- discuss organisation-wide challenges, opportunities and appropriate actions.

Delegates benefited from sharing effective practice, peer-to-peer knowledge transfer, and tools and strategies to support the growth of their Apprenticeship service, leaving with an action plan identifying next steps for their organisation.

Workshop agenda

- 09.30 Registration and coffee
- 10.00 Welcome, domestics and introductions
- 10.20 Context for growth
- 11.15 Break
- 11.30 Employer engagement, what do employers want?
- 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 Funding
- 14.00 Growth strategies
- 14.30 Baseline assessment and Action plan
- 14.40 Break
- 15.20 Evaluations and close

They took part in active learning sets throughout, working on pre-prepared assignments and activities to encourage peer-to-peer knowledge transfer. Plenary sessions consolidating the learning outcomes followed all the sessions and allowed delegates to explore cross-provider interpretation. They also allowed facilitated professional discussion and Socratic questioning to enhance outcomes and understanding.

Particular attention was given to the following key issues during the sessions:

- understanding the requirement for employer contributions for all those aged 19 or more;
- different ways of approaching and negotiating the financial contribution with the employers;
- upskilling the staff who were tasked with obtaining the employer contributions;
- the best payment strategies to implement;
- 'selling by stealth', one QCF unit at a time;
- increasing the numbers of apprentices who progress;
- the value of an Apprenticeship programme to any employer.

Further attention was paid to delegates completing a SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis of their Apprenticeship project and a baseline assessment and action plan to ensure the key points of the day were captured and an action plan was taken away to progress.

All delegates received a USB stick containing all the assignments, tools and activities from the workshop, the relevant national, regional and local policy documents and relevant local and regional labour market information.

Provider response

Evaluations from the workshops show a 100% satisfaction rate. Comment and future actions detailed in the evaluations demonstrate that providers will change and develop their Apprenticeship growth strategy following the workshop.

Impact

Provider testimonies

“This thought-provoking workshop provided us with the opportunity for discussion and sharing among providers and useful tools for growing Apprenticeships and other provision. Well worth a day of my time.”

Gillian Donald, Director of Business Enterprise, Bournemouth and Poole College

“The ‘Growing your apprenticeship service’ workshop was a great conduit for a variety of private training providers and colleges to share ideas, update their current knowledge with potential new techniques and absorb the latest available data delivered by the presentation team. There were several points that were fed back through to our organisation for immediate follow-up and possible development to assist in developing our programmes. A positive event that delivered points of information that we were not aware of!”

Mark Stevens, Director, Didac Ltd

“The sessions have really helped us to focus on the need to adopt a flexible approach to persuading employers to train their staff, using the fully funded apprenticeship cohort as the flagship, whilst selling QCF units and building them up to Apprenticeships for those less willing to contribute half the funding up front.”

Jackie Lowrie, Quality Manager, Focus Training

It is too early for statistical evidence on Apprenticeship growth but there is anecdotal evidence that providers have harnessed the information, tools and strategies covered in the workshop and are making progress.

The sessions opened up a variety of options for providers, who went on to select different routes to grow their Apprenticeship service. Here is a summary of feedback from providers since the workshops.

- Swindon College – making far more use of a progression strategy discussed and agreed with employers to grow Apprenticeship numbers by working with employers at an early stage to explore and agree progression routes from one level to the next.

- First Aid South West – understanding that employers would pay for recruitment of ‘employable’ young people and so using the personal learning and thinking skills as a lead item in the delivery model.
- Cornwall College – can now see the emerging higher level Apprenticeships as the key new growth area that will enable them to have an impact on the marketplace at a new level (especially with partially funded Foundation Degrees in some higher Apprenticeship frameworks).
- Focus Training – refining the focus of the recruitment service they offer in line with changes in the demography of the local 16 to 18 year-old population over the next five years.
- Pathway for Success – researching emerging sectors in which to deliver Apprenticeships to overcome the challenge of delivering in just one sector.
- Working Links – now actively looking for provider partners to link the job-seeking element of Jobcentre Plus and Department for Work and Pensions contracts to sustainable employment that may include an Apprenticeship.
- TTS Group –looking to broaden their delivery base and add new and related frameworks in response to anticipated problems achieving financial contribution for the 19+ apprentices from their hairdressing employers.
- Exeter College –looking to meet employer need by adding individual QCF units to their portfolio that can be proposed to the employer on a full-cost basis. On successful completion of the service additional units could be proposed or a full Apprenticeship framework. The initial units can contribute to the employer contribution. This introduces the term “selling by stealth”.
- Academy of Training – had never considered the concept of learner contributions towards Apprenticeships in the right context. Academy can now see the opportunities to gradually convert previous accredited training into an Apprenticeship.
- Bournemouth and Poole College – researching new sectors and new frameworks following the workshops.
- Venus Training – committed to using recognition of prior learning in the QCF to bring in employers who have already been training their own staff. This will increase Apprenticeship numbers.
- A strong push from many providers to put staff forward into Apprenticeship competitions; last year the south west was bottom of the nominations league for the National Skills Awards, this year the region has risen to fourth.
- Strong evidence that providers in the South West are using Apprenticeship awards opportunities as a public relations tool to raise the profile of apprentices and Apprenticeships in their local area. There has been a marked

increase in applicants from the south west in the Apprenticeship awards this year.