

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

**Case study: Skills Exchange Network for Teachers
Created by: Grimsby Institute Group**

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SKILLS EXCHANGE NETWORK FOR TEACHERS: USING CPD TO PROMOTE OTLA AND IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS

Opening Statement

“Welcome,

This case study outlines the output of a collaborative educational partnership which, over the past several months has worked to produce outstanding teaching, learning and assessment (OTLA) as a result of staff CPD placements in industry. OTLA is at the centre of everything we do in education, and our partnership is helping to create and sustain it by developing exchange relations with employers, and empowering teaching staff to bring their placement experiences into the classroom.

Please read through the case study (and our employer toolkit: ‘A Guide for Employers to Host Teaching Staff in Your Workplace’) and use anything you think is valuable. We welcome any future collaboration and joint development, and are grateful for any feedback about the project – we hope you find our work useful!”

Toni Rhodes

Executive Director of Quality Improvement and Innovation

Grimsby Institute Group

On behalf of:

Skills Exchange Network for Teachers

- Between October 2017 and February 2018, the *Skills Exchange Network for Teachers (SENT)* partnership arranged a number of work placements for teaching staff within industry. Once those placements were complete, they cascaded their experience to colleagues, and endeavoured to improve their students' learning experience as a result. We then devised a toolkit for employers to empower and encourage them to host teacher placements as a way to formalise and replicate the most useful parts of our process.

Initial Rationale

- The areas served by the partnership include wards that rank very high for economic, social or educational deprivation. The Grimsby Institute recruits a significant proportion of its learners from three wards that rank in the top four for indices of multiple deprivation for England. Rotherham has levels of deprivation and whilst East Riding is relatively prosperous, it includes the coastal and rural districts, coupled with the Institute's catchment areas in Lincolnshire which have low levels of prior attainment. Collectively, the consortium serves areas with structural employment and skills issues.
- SENT was designed to deliver industrial updating and "back to the floor" for staff to improve teacher training and assessment by placing them in industry, supporting indirect staff, leading to improved learning and assessment for students,
- The objective was to transform Continuing Professional Development and industrial updating, bridging the gap between productivity demands of industry, and improvements in sector specific quality teaching, learning and assessment via a new collaborative exchange programme.
- With the apprenticeship reforms, a paradigm shift is required to foster closer collaboration to improve economic alignment, as well as the quality of learning, training and assessment to meet industrial requirements.



I went on a work placement to encourage more women into the engineering sector, and to learn how to use Auto Computer Aided Design better

LAURA (ENGINEERING)

Aims

The main aims of the project, identified by the Education and Training Foundation and the Association of Colleges are:

- to support learners to progress and achieve through an improved quality of teaching learning and assessment
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- to improve employer relationships, allowing learners to make more informed choices through a destination focused curriculum and style of delivery.
- for teaching staff to update their skills and improve their practice
- create through improved teaching practice a positive and measurable difference to the culture and quality of technical knowledge, teaching and learning and learner experience
- improve quality of and access to impartial information, advice and guidance

Preparation for introduction of Skills Plan / Technical skills and routes

A crucial impetus for the project has been the drive to build capacity for the impending introduction of T-levels. Sending staff into the workplace was seen as an important step in the creation and development of an 'exchange relationship' between employers and education providers. SENT was keen to see if the groundwork could be laid by CPD work placements. Not all placements addressed this directly, the main emphasis was always the development of OTLA, but SENT is confident that employers have seen the benefit of placements in creating that relationship, and our employer toolkit is written with this in mind.

The original aim for the toolkit was to prepare employers for the arrival of T-levels by providing a comprehensive guide to all aspects of student placement. Towards the end of the project, it was felt that this was beyond its scope, and led away from the focus of OTLA. The toolkit now focuses more narrowly on the intersection between placements, OTLA and employer engagement.

Initial Hypothesis

Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment (OTLA) of vocational education requires an effective relationship between teachers and employers. Therefore, targeted CPD placements and mentoring training are effective ways to develop a positive exchange relationship and will improve teaching learning and assessment

resulting in a positive impact on learners and employers.

Partners

We set out to secure a range of education partners for this project, with a specific remit to engage 'non-college' providers: smaller and private training providers. Circumstances, including changes to leadership, time and staff shortages, meant that three of the initial partners were unable to commit during the early stages of the project. Two private training providers who joined the project after this stage were unable to make long-term commitments and ceased active participation. The final partnership that makes up SENT is:

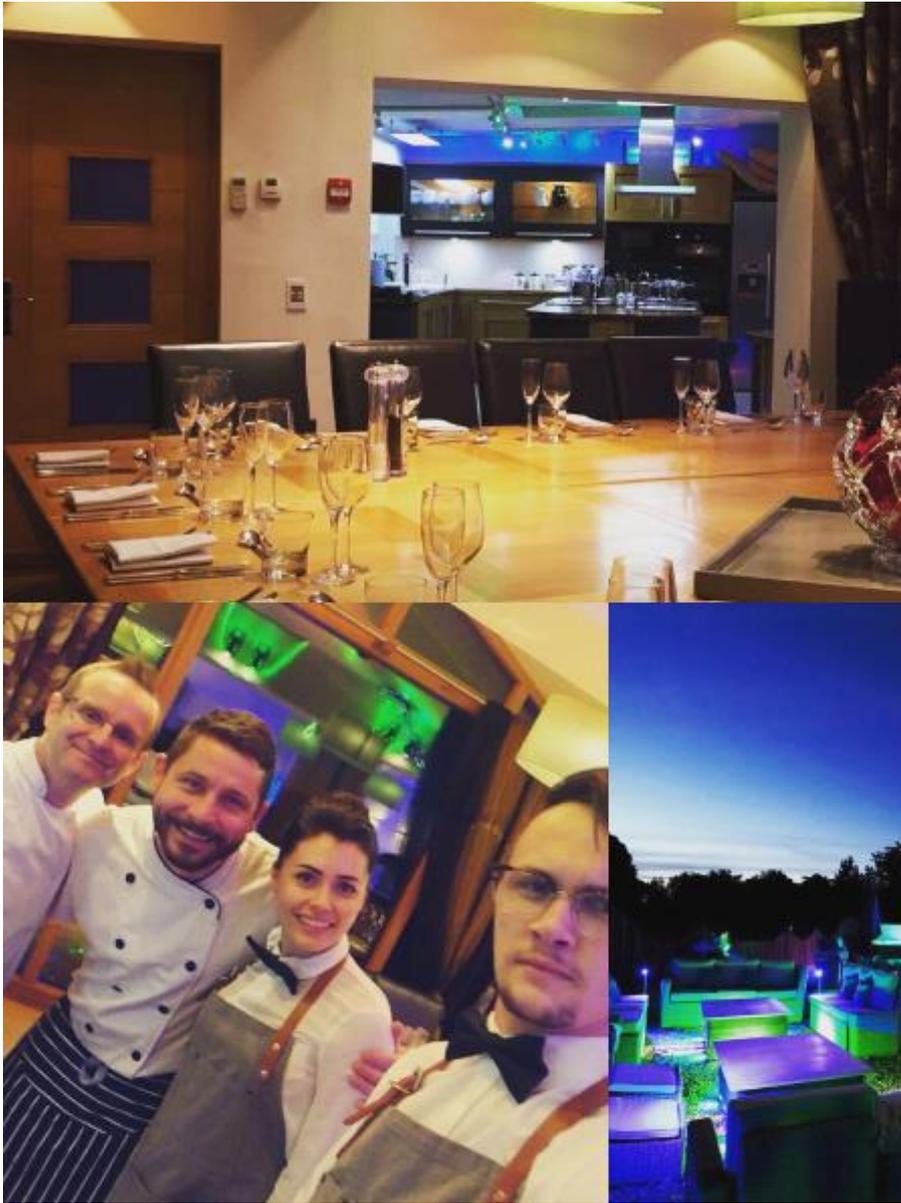
- Rotherham College
- Grimsby Institute for Further and Higher Education (GIFHE)
- East Riding College

This initial turbulence in the partnership was instructive for us. Firstly, it emphasised the importance of planning prospective staff placements as early as possible, something that we have implemented in our toolkit for employers. This also gave us an insight into the hybrid nature of private training providers: as educators, they are much more beholden to short-term market forces, which hampers their ability to make commitments that can withstand the need to make difficult business decisions.

In a similar fashion, the active collaborative nature of the project fluctuated according to the needs of each partner. All three partners organised, managed and reflected on their own placements. Initially, more placements were allocated to partners other than the lead (GIFHE). However, time constraints meant that GIFHE conducted 12 of the 16 placements that have occurred to date. Being flexible and responsive to changing circumstances has meant that the SENT partnership has changed in its constitution and the balance of its actions. The toolkit and case study was drafted by the project administrator, with active consultation from all partners.

Numbers involved

- 16 staff members from 3 partners were directly engaged in organising placements within industry
- 16 placements so far by with 10 employers in 6 sectors:
 - o Catering and Hospitality – 7 placements
 - o Creative and Design – 3 placements
 - o Digital – 3 placement
 - o Construction – 1 placement
 - o Hair & Beauty – 1 placement
 - o Engineering – 1 placement
- 35 staff members had feedback from directly engaged staff
- over 350 students were taught by those staff members who went out on placement



What we Did: Methods

Planning Phase

- Once partners were engaged, they were encouraged to make their own contacts in industry or develop existing ones. This was to take advantage of local knowledge, and also to utilise the specific skills of each partner. This led to a wide range of placements, both in terms of sector (see above), but also in terms of duration – one placement lasting five days, with most lasting one.
- Partners issued their placement staff with a pre-placement planner in order to capture their specific goals:

Sector engagement

Staff wrote their own aims for CPD, which can be grouped as follows:

- improve teaching and learning assessment
- forge links with industry
- improve access to impartial IAG
- ensure teaching is in line with current industrial practices.
- discuss work placement or employer engagements hours.
- engage with employers with relevance to T qualifications.
- update commercial and industrial expertise

Practitioners were asked why a placement in their particular sector would be a priority. This was a useful exercise when gauging their perception of their own sector:

Catering/Hospitality

- The placements would allow teaching staff to remain up to date with the latest specific industry requirements. This mainly centred on the different types of restaurant visited – from Michelin starred establishments to college caterers. Much of the post-placement feedback from these staff members centred on raising aspirations and giving more specific information about employment opportunities.

Digital

- The Digital placement was planned with the future introduction of T-Levels in mind, and also regional opportunities in the form of the role of multinationals creating a need for a wide range of digital skills across sectors. Applications for programmes in creative and digital sectors have increased significantly, particularly in 2017/18 across levels of FE.

Creative

- This sector is a Humber Local Enterprise Partnership priority. The LEP is concerned with meeting new skills demands, in particular for competence in digital production technologies and computer-based applications and interfaces. Staff were keen to make sure that students understood the fast-paced nature of the sector.

Construction & Engineering

- The main concern was to upskill in the latest practical techniques, and also to address a perceived gender imbalance in the industry by raising aspirations of female students.

Hair & Beauty

- Hairdressing is a growth area for employment, particularly in men's grooming. The aim was to attract more male learners and broaden opportunities for all students.

Advancing equality and diversity for students

In terms of promoting equality and diversity, tutors' aims centred on:

- widening what was on offer in the curriculum through updating their skills, thereby potentially attracting more diverse students
- developing students' knowledge and understanding about running a business with the aim of raising aspirations in this area
- passing on information to students about the range of multicultural cuisine available,
- raising aspirations of students through informing students about the opportunities for a more diverse workforce in the catering sector
- discussing the ranges of job opportunities available within industry
- varying the tasks that are set to ensure that everyone gets to learn at their own paces.

Placement Phase

Between October 2017 and January 2018, 16 placements took place, with two still to be translated into the classroom, and 2 cancelled due to partner withdrawal.

Between November 2017 and February 2018, those staff who went out on placements cascaded what they'd learned to colleagues.

They then brought their experiences back to their students with the aim of making their teaching, learning and assessment outstanding.

Output Phase

The network's active partners contributed to a toolkit, in the form of:

'A Guide for Employers to host Teacher Placements'.

SENT is holding an employer engagement event where more feedback can be gathered on the potential for effective relationships between employers and educators as a result of project actions. If this is successful, the partnership will roll this out as a regular event.

FEEDBACK AND FINDINGS

Following the placements, staff were invited to reflect on their experiences, and what they intended to pass on to students and colleagues.

It has been difficult to measure causation, rather than correlation, with regard to improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.

Teaching practices can be influenced by a number of factors, and isolating the influence of a CPD placement wasn't often possible. Our findings are gathered, where possible, from staff statements, lesson observations and an ongoing student survey. The student survey is still open in order to capture more longer-term results.

The partnership reflected on their feedback and organised it into four categories of benefit. Organising our findings in this manner was done specifically to communicate them to employers in the SENT toolkit:

Finding 1: Staff 'back to the floor' placements help create outstanding teaching and learning

Original ETF project aims:

- to support learners to progress and achieve through an improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- for teaching staff to update their skills and improve their practice
- to create (through improved teaching practice) a positive and measureable difference to the culture and quality of technical knowledge, teaching and learning and learner experience.

24 staff who either engaged directly with the 'back to the floor' activity, or were updated by those who did, were observed in the classroom before and after the placement.

It has been difficult to directly attribute any short term improvements in their teaching and assessment to specific components of their placements within the time available, as the lesson observations were 'blind' in the sense that they were carried out by observers who weren't linked to the project. Nevertheless, the following correlation could be seen:

- 5 were observed to have improved their embedding of employability and industry standards
- 9 improved their use of technology to enhance learning
- 6 improved their promotion of active learning in the classroom

- 7 improved their students' engagement with the lesson being observed

All 24 enabled their students to progress during the observed lesson

We anonymously surveyed the students who were taught by the practitioners, in order that they could comment on their perception of their learning experience: 73 students responded so far (the survey is being kept open to capture the more long-term benefits of any improved TLA). 96% of them recognised that their learning was improved by TLA as a result of employment and workplace information.

Examples of improved TLA by sector:

Catering

Diane runs a training restaurant kitchen. During her placement she acquired knowledge on the latest food trends and presentation ideas using ingredients with an Asian influence. Back in the training restaurant, drawing on her own extensive experience and her newly-acquired knowledge, Diane devised a training restaurant menu for level two learners who used this to prepare, cook and present their lunchtime menu. In this way, learners benefitted directly in expanding their own knowledge and expertise.

She was later observed in lesson improving her students' employability skills & knowledge of industry standards: 'industry expectations were observed throughout, with continued use of vocational and industry terminology that both supported learning and stretched knowledge'.

Garret is a new programme leader for level three professional cookery, so the opportunity was especially inspirational for him to be exposed to food within a Michelin star establishment. Since the visit Garret's own presentation style has improved and is now impacting positively on the learners. This has given them an enhanced outlook on the styles of presentation, in turn is likely to gain them a better chance of obtaining a Merit or Distinction at the end of the year.

Creative & Digital

As a result of completing the work-based placement, several changes were made to GIFHE's Level 2 Computing planned delivery and assessment:

- A project was changed from a web development based individual task to a group task based on employer feedback and professional practices

- The importance of the General Data Protection Regulation was emphasised where appropriate, including changes in legislation to prepare learners for industry
- More innovative forms of online collaboration and sharing software were used to develop efficient ways of working together
- Within employability sessions, able to give a more realistic idea of progression routes for FE, HE and employment with achievable destinations

Construction

Nigel found the main learning tool gained from the site placement was the type of flooring used in the property: it can withstand moisture for a prolonged period of time. The flooring can be also used as a safety tool as the bricklayers will be able to work on a solid base, which is much safer regarding H&S on the building site. His students were observed to progress well during an observation of lesson.

Finding 2: Employers benefit from learners being well informed about the industry they want to work in

Improved teaching and learning leads to better students, who then enter the workplace with more to offer in terms of qualifications, and/or a better idea of what occurs in the workplace.

Several staff were able to advise students more accurately about potential careers as a result of their placement. For example:

Adam was able to 'discuss the available opportunities, state of employment market, required soft and hard skills and talk about changes in the design sector due to technology and convergence, with greater confidence and specific direct experiential examples.

He was also able to use his experiences on placement to inform apprentices about his own broader understanding of the wider media industries, providing a direct case study, to allow them to interview him and then use this case study directly in their assessments.

As a result of **Kathryn's** restaurant placement, she has taken a lot of their practices and used them within her own delivery, from new ways of tracking customers with allergens, through to customer service skills which previously had not implemented (escorting guests, explaining about the ingredients used in the dishes rather than just simply serving the food). The catering team now encourage their own learners to do this within the training restaurant which has improved the learner's

customer service skills and improved their outlook.

The team leader on that placement (**Paul**) has stated that:

‘The training restaurant service and some of the menu items have reflected some of the dishes from both restaurants which means all levels have had a degree of impact – obviously with level threes there is so much from these visits that can be used and implemented due to the level at which both companies are running at. We intend on inviting staff from both companies into to discuss the industry with our learners within Employability sessions and also create work experience opportunities for them within this and next academic year, hopefully this will be an on-going relationship’.

Darren discussed the catering placement with students, helping them understand the role catering outlets have to play in the service sector side of catering and the various job roles and opportunities available in different establishments. During the placement he used some new pieces of equipment that were not around when he worked in industry, and by updating the students on this they have up to date knowledge of the sort of equipment used in modern kitchens.

- All employers interviewed said they were now more likely to host a teacher placement in the future
- 93% of students surveyed say they now know more about their future employment opportunities in the subject
- 97% now know more about what happens in the workplace
- 87% of 23 employers surveyed anonymously said they regarded vocational education as important to their company. The project will follow this up with information on the toolkit and ideas for taking relationships with industry forward in a way that helps to promote OTLA.

Employers' view:

Nick (Builder)

The teacher came for a placement and learned the type of things that the next generation of workforce are looking for, and what's important in the business world. It's been quite beneficial for myself, seeing a tutor in our environment.

Teachers' view:

Connor (Digital):

I am able to improve our local curriculum by addressing the needs of local employers. This will help improve progression and enrich learners. Employability sessions will now focus on new

ideas and expectations of understanding, communication and interpersonal skills.

Finding 3: Placements improve employer / educator relationships and help collaborative partnerships

The original project aim was to improve employer relationships, allowing learners to make more informed choices through a destination focused curriculum and style of delivery.

We asked practitioners to consult with employers. Several of the employers identified their own aims for the placement. Of those, some responded to our surveys and/or telephone interviews, or participated in the dissemination event to give further information:

A builder looked for closer links with the college. Afterward the placement, he said that 'It's been quite beneficial for myself, seeing a tutor in our environment. Our apprentices got a bit of tuition onsite all day'. Nick attended the dissemination event and expressed a strong interest in furthering their links with education providers, and taking on staff / student placements.

A small Creative Media firm looked for information on work experience and possible employment for students if the learner is right for the position. Commenting on the impact of the placement, the director said 'it will be a while before the benefits are known, as we're looking at the next generation of students', but he would be more likely to engage with education providers in the future.

A Michelin Star restaurant wanted to understand the need and advantages of work placements for students studying a tech cert, and to understand the difficulties faced by an FE college providing a range of professional hospitality courses, while a more modest catering firm wanted to understand how the staff force of the future are being trained in colleges. Discussing impact afterwards, an employee at the latter said it was 'too early to tell, but it's nice to interact as a business with other colleges', and they would be more likely to engage with education providers in the future.

Networking and collaboration are important for business and educators. Our toolkit shows that an important way to prepare to host student placements (for example for T-levels) will be to host a teacher placement.

All employers interviewed (who had placements) said they were now more likely to engage more closely with education providers in the future.

Employers' view:

Nick (Builder)

Our apprentices were given some tuition by the teacher onsite.

Teachers' view:

Paul (Catering)

Being the manager for the department gave me an opportunity to discuss and analyse recruitment with the employer/owner. It also gave me an insight into how modern restaurant function has evolved since I worked in the industry.

David (Catering)

My role is 50% learning practitioner and 50% skills and employability trainer. This means I make contact with employers to create work experience opportunities for learners. I gained extended time with employees to discuss what they look for in new starters, which is adding to how I plan employability, enterprise and pastoral sessions across all levels of each programme.

Finding 4: Students' aspirations are raised by having a more realistic idea of the workplace, and equality and diversity can be promoted

The original project aims were to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and improve quality of and access to impartial information, advice and guidance

Promoting equality and diversity in a work placement can lead to more information and greater aspirations for students. This can help to ensure an employer has access to the whole pool of talent for its current and future workforce.

Nigel spoke to his student groups regarding the new skills he'd learned and that one was never too old to learn. Also, the company were more than happy to take students on work placements and made no indication regarding any formal qualification requirements for them. He was observed in lesson improving his embedding of equality and diversity into the session.

Tracey is using her increased knowledge of male grooming to contribute to a wider curriculum offer, which could attract more diverse students. Her increased knowledge and understanding of running a business will be used to contribute to raising aspirations.

Toni's placement didn't cover E&D directly but it was reflective of the

current gender inequality in the sector as there were no females employed within the company, and Toni is endeavouring to promote discussions with students about this issue.

Chris explained the variety of ingredients used in producing multi-cultural foods, raising their awareness of alternatives.

Darren discussed the range of job opportunities available within the industry as part of a unit in the qualification. Learners looked at different jobs within the establishment he visited and were encouraged to think about the equality and diversity of candidates applying for these roles.

Diane reiterated to learners that anyone who aspires to reach the high level of cookery skills we observed can achieve. She was observed in lesson improving her embedding of equality and diversity into the session.

At **Kathryn's** placement, all but two of the front-of-house staff were male, and also not from the United Kingdom. She encouraged her learners to discuss the implications for E&D.

Paul used his insight into the higher end of the industry assess how employers incorporate diversity into working life, (in terms of using staff with a range of ethnic back grounds to draw upon the influences within other cultures (ingredients and uses), and how they treat their employees, including work patterns and employing anyone with any special requirements. He was observed in lesson improving his embedding of equality and diversity into the session.

Laura set out to vary the tasks that are set, assigning tasks to specific groups and ensuring that everyone gets to start from the beginning and learn at their own paces. A key aim of her placement was to encourage more women into the engineering sector.

- Of the 24 staff who were observed in the classroom, 10 were seen to have improved their embedding of E&D from before the placement, and 10 were observed to have improve their differentiation, or treating students as individuals according to their needs.
- 94% of students surveyed know more about equality and diversity in this subject from taking their class than before

Students' view:

(Digital)

'I know what applications are used in the workplace'

(Engineering)

'I understand that there are a lot more roles in Engineering for Women'

Updated hypothesis:

Our original hypothesis stated that 'OTLA' in vocational education *requires* an effective relationship between teachers and employers. Although such a relationship is not a requirement of OTLA, the placements have proved effective overall in improving teaching and learning.

The final round of employer engagement events and follow up activities will determine whether a positive relationship has developed as a result.

An updated hypothesis would state that planned and targeted CPD placements are effective ways to improve teaching, learning and assessment and help students to make more informed choices about their next steps. This will result in a positive impact on learners and employers.

Impact compared with initial predictions

- The initial goal was immediate improvement in the levels of industrial up-dating, with more companies supporting work-related training. The project has achieved this.
- Improved learner outcomes and learners are more employer ready. Increased capacity with industry partners to support work-related training and mentoring in the workplace.
- The Institute will work in partnership with industry and training providers to develop a new and innovative model of staff development and employer engagement with work-based learning. The latter will be formalised within the SENT employer toolkit, which will include a menu of employer activities and training models to enable industry to more confidently approach work based learning.
- The toolkit is ready for dissemination, and the model will continue to be developed in partnership, particularly as more long-term data becomes available about benefits from the project.

Digital – impact statement:

Beyond the initial gains by students in the classroom, the main impact will be in the curriculum developments for 2018/19 and further.

Degree revalidation in this area will lead to more control over the curriculum design. In this way everything the teaching placement is informing programme design decisions and plans for future delivery.

It will also enable support to the IT team with developing their programmes and ensuring they are considering diverse careers options available in these workplaces, where digital teams and creativity are changing the way organisations operate.

Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment

The project features a number of factors that represent outstanding TLA

- We have made specific links between staff CPD and learners' experiences which can be modelled or emulated;
- Staff CPD 'back to the floor' activities can now be planned in a more deliberate manner, with specific aims around teaching, learning and assessment, employer relationships and capacity building;
- A model of collaborative partnership has been tested in which results and feedback can be shared. This can work as a model of sharing good practice in the region, and potentially brokering cross-partner employer relationships with multiple education providers to carry out staff CPD across a wider area.

Skills Education Network for Teachers – Statement of Intent:

Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment (OTLA) of vocational education benefits from an effective exchange relationship between teachers and employers.

Planned and targeted CPD placements are effective ways to develop a positive exchange relationship, helping to improve teaching, learning and assessment, and allowing students to make more informed choices about their next steps. This will result in a positive impact on learners and employers.

We therefore aim to include measurable goals in our strategic and quality planning to improve the management and evaluation of staff CPD 'back to the floor' placements.

Evaluating the SENT project in terms of ETF's Professional Standards

Although not made explicit during the project, ETF's Professional Standards framework intersected strongly with our project during its various stages:

The planning stage:

Professional Values and Attributes

('Develop your own judgment of what works and does not work in your teaching and training')

Staff had to consider the potential impact of their CPD, and what actions they could take to maximise it. After reflecting on their teaching, they then

began to create links with an employer in order to better develop the potential for a collaborative relationship.

The placement (and post-placement reflection) stage:

Professional Knowledge & Understanding

(‘Develop deep and critically informed knowledge and understanding in theory and practice’)

At this stage, staff were applying their theoretical knowledge of pedagogy and subject in a (possibly) unfamiliar setting, and evaluating their practice with non-teaching staff, and developing their understanding of their own role.

Bringing it back to the learning environment:

Professional Skills

(‘Develop your expertise and skills to ensure the best outcomes for learners’)

At this point, staff did their best to motivate and inspire learners with their experiences, planning and delivering effective learning programmes, and promoting the use of technology where relevant.

CONCLUSIONS

Lessons learned

- Placements need to be planned a long time in advance. As noted in our toolkit, educators and employers work to different calendars and rhythms throughout the year. It became very difficult to pin employers down to particular days, as their priorities changed at short notice.
- Teaching staff prepared for placements in different ways. Although our pre-placement planning paperwork (the 4 p’s) helped to standardise expectations, this phase would benefit from a short training session for those about to go on placements.
- As ETF Professional Standards become embedded, we will be able to make them more explicit at an earlier stage in the project, allowing for a specific structure for reflection, professional development, and impact assessment.

Next steps

SENT will continue to develop the link between staff CPD in the workplace, and OTLA. A joint statement of commitment to this end has been worked on by all partners, which will be assessed for inclusion in strategic documents as appropriate. A comprehensive employer guide to student placements in preparation for T-levels is an extension goal

that will be considered by partners.

In the future, we will continue to develop the planning and evaluation paperwork for staff members to enable them to prepare for high-quality placements. An ideal way to continue the benefit of this exercise will be to link with staff appraisals and development plans in the future. As more staff complete CPD in this way, we will be leverage employer relations in order to maximise OTLA across provision.

One takeaway message

All stakeholders agree that staff 'back to the floor' placements can lead to OTLA and improved employer relationships. Importantly, though, staff CPD in the workplace can create and develop exchange relationships with employers, keeping them 'warm' for further collaboration, and helping them adjust to the changes in vocational education.

For educators, this will be a key plank in the successful implementation of the Post-16 Skills Plan: employers can be persuaded of the benefits of hosting student placements by engaging with staff during workplace CPD.