

Work Mentor

Riverside Training



Project Synopsis

The Hereford & Worcester WBLPRD Group have designed and piloted 4 modules of a mentoring programme targeted at employers who support apprentices in the workplace. The mentoring programme has been designed to be web-based or paper-based and has been piloted with 20 employers across three WBL providers. The training modules have been made available in paper format and through a web based link from Riverside Training's website using the following link:

www.riverside-training.co.uk/work-mentor/work-mentor.html

The four modules include:

- 1) Understanding Apprenticeships
- 2) Managing the expectations of all parties
- 3) Planning learning in the workplace
- 4) Moving from a skills coach to a learning coach

Each module contains information and reflective exercises that are aimed at getting the employer to think about how they support learners in their workplace. The first module is an introduction to the terminology of Apprenticeships targeted at new employers. Modules 2 and 3 examine key aspects of employer engagement and structure including the Apprenticeship Agreement and Planning as a tool for learner development. The fourth module looks in more depth at the skills of a mentor to help employers empower learners to feel valued as employees.

Along with the modules is a workbook that can be used by employers as a discrete learning booklet without support.

The web based navigation has also been made available as a discrete CD rom for those that cannot access it via the internet.

Project Aims

The aim of the project is to develop the mentoring and coaching skills of employers who are supervising apprentices at work by establishing their level of understanding and recognition of their role in coaching and mentoring in the workplace. It will develop flexible learning materials that can be used with those supervisors in the work place to develop their skills of: negotiation; giving constructive feedback; action planning and target setting; encouraging the reflective learner. These materials will be available in a range of formats including hard copy and electronic web based learning according to employer needs.

Whilst a lot of attention is being placed upon the teacher developing their skills, this project focuses on the employer in work based training who has a significant impact on the learning that takes place at work.

Employers provide opportunities for employment but are not necessarily involved in the learning process. This project will seek to standardise the knowledge and skills of employers so that they can take a greater role in supporting learners in the workplace.

It is an innovative approach as it provides learning materials as bite sized packages that can be delivered through the internet or using traditional paper-based methods. Another innovative approach to this project is that we did ask employers to attend a classroom based course but delivered bitesized interactive materials in the workplace. By carrying out a training needs analysis of each employers needs, the training modules were tailored to the individual needs.

Project Delivery

Throughout the project, the following actions took place:

4th Jan 2010 – 28th March 2010

Survey of 100 employers across 5 training providers to identify the level of coaching and mentoring currently taking place and the training needs requirement for supervisors in the workplace.

5th April 2010 – 30th April 2010

Survey results analysed and the training needs requirements of employers identified. This report will be given to the H&WTP PRD Group with a Training Needs Analysis form to be used with piloting employers.

5th May 2010 – 31st July 2010

A pilot group of 3 providers was convened to develop a series of training materials in bite sized format to meet the training needs of employers. The providers included: Keith St Peters Hair Academy; PGL Travel Ltd and Riverside Training. The materials were designed to be delivered flexibly through one-to-one sessions in the workplace; group exercises; or remotely using dedicated web based on-line learning.

1st September 2010 – 19th December 2010

The materials were piloted with a selected group of 20 employers across the providers. The pilot sub group met in November to monitor progress and report on activity. Employers were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather feedback about their experiences to monitor their satisfaction and levels of understanding.

4th January 2011 – 31st March 2011

The PRD Group met to review the outcomes and the pilot group amended and refined the products for review and dissemination. A presentation was prepared and given to 19 providers at a SER Event held on 9th February 2011 on Employer Engagement organised by the Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire Training Providers Association

Project Outcomes

During the process of the Project, the following outcomes were realised:

- A web based mentoring course in 4 modules
- A Paper based mentoring course in 4 modules
- A CD rom of the web based course
- An Employer Training Needs Analysis for Mentoring Skills
- A post course Evaluation Questionnaire

As a result of the experience, the following key learning points were realised:

- Whilst the project was looking at an e-learning type approach, it is important to have a versatile and flexible delivery method to accommodate various employers. As every employer has different circumstances, it was important to ensure that any learning could be delivered as web-based or paper-based delivery.
- Whilst there were four modules in the programme, not all employers needed to study from 1 to 4 and so a good initial assessment is required to tailor the programme where it is most needed.
- Probably the most interesting and useful modules was module 4, moving from a skills coach to a learning coach. As many of the employers are technically competent, there is a need to help employers understand the need to support learners as learners. In this case mentoring skills concentrated on empowering learners to think for themselves.
- Of the small number of employers involved, all said that they found it useful – the next stage is to identify how this could become a mandatory aspect of apprenticeship training.

Sharing project findings

A presentation was prepared and given to 23 delegates from providers at a SER Event held on 9th February 2011 on Employer Engagement organised by the Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire Training Providers Association. At this event, it was very well received.

I now feel that it needs to be rolled out to more employers and the blend of modules and delivery method refined to meet different types of employers. We shall continue to do this through our PRD Group. It would be very useful for us to meet other PRD Groups or individuals who have done something similar.

In the current climate with a greater emphasis on employer contributions, reduced funding for apprenticeships and the need to encourage employers to participate in apprenticeship learning, the need for a structured approach to mentoring in the workplace is an important aspect of this equation. The project funding has enabled a collaborative approach to the subject across providers.

We intend to continue with this work as a positive approach to work based learning and a response to the requirements of SASE and “Skills for Growth”.