**Support for Literacy, Language   
and Numeracy**

Case study:  *Valkyrie Support Services Ltd*

**Introduction: *Background to the supported organisation***

**What is the aim of the organisation, what does it provide?**

Valkyrie Support Services Is a provider of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Programmes, specialising in lean business improvement, backed by four major UK educational institutions and quality accredited by three UK National Skills Academies. Valkyrie off a highly flexible approach to the service delivery and use their position within their network to bring attractive government funding subsidies.

**Where are they based?**

Valkyrie Support Services is based at Beamhurst, near Uttoxeter.

**Key people involved in developments**:

Sue Morgan

Director of Curriculum and Workplace Skills

Richard Hick

Director of Operations

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**What challenges is the organisation facing?**

As a provider who is not yet delivering Functional Skills programmes within Apprenticeship Frameworks, Valkyrie recognise and embrace the need to prepare for the change to ensure that their procedures and approaches are robust enough for a smooth transition from Key Skills to Functional Skills.

The key issues and challenges are to ensure ALL tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced to deliver functional Maths, English and ICT through embedded delivery models. In addition to this is the need to have both curriculum knowledge of the standards required for the qualification and understanding of how they can ‘stretch’ learners to meet the challenges of Functional Skills.

**What help did they need from LSIS?**

To enable the company to have an effective transition from Key Skills to Functional Skills, funding was made available through the LSIS virtual account. The initial meeting with the LSIS consultant included an audit of current provision using relevant sections from the Heath Check document. As a result of findings an action plan was devised highlighting actions, outcomes and timescales to work towards a whole organisational approach to Functional Skills.

Key elements of the plan were:

* To embed functional skills into vocational learning
* To develop a structured approach to delivery of functional skills
* To ensure that staff are fully equipped and trained to deliver functional skills from September 2012

The next stage was to develop a clear organisational strategy and policy for implementation.

CPD sessions and workshops were identified in addition to professional development planning for the workforce.

The first CPD session for Functional Skills took place on April 10th. The aim of the session was to raise awareness of Functional Skills at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 and to consider implications for delivery within own context. All of the staff were involved in the session – this included: Directors, Operations Manager, Administrator and Tutors.

*“Richard and I felt it was very important for the whole team to have good grounding on Functional Skills, in order for the organisation to have a smooth transition from key skills. It was great to see a lot of positivity and the ‘can do’ attitude throughout the team.”*

Sue Morgan

The following further sessions were identified and planned to be offered on dates which coincide with staff meetings to ensure maximum attendance:

* Teaching Functional Mathematics
* Developing Functionality in English
* Assessment of Problem Solving for Functional Skills

Training is a key area for Valkyrie and is highly valuable in terms of developing skills and knowledge of all the team. Sue Morgan is responsible for taking functional skills forward.

**Workshops**

Once all tutors had gained a sound understanding of the principles and practice of delivering Functional Skills they would then progress to mapping their current lesson plans to functional Maths, English and in some cases ICT. This would illustrate clearly where the functional skills were naturally occurring and could be embedded whilst highlighted areas which required specific discrete skills delivery.

All of the staff are fully aware that, in order to support learners to achieve transferability and mastery they would need to create opportunities to practice and reinforce problem solving throughout the training.

The next stage would be to extend and develop functional skills materials and explore web sites in particular the new Excellence Gateway to build up a bank of resources which could be accessed electronically by all staff.

**Assessment tools**

Valkyrie recognise that the assessment tool which they currently use does not assess the problem solving aspect of functionality. They plan to scope the current market to explore other assessment options and if necessary devise an in house problem solving assessment which could be used as initial and formative assessment.

**Professional development of staff**

Developing staff skills will also be a vital part of the success of future programmes. Five out of the nine delivery staff have PTLLS qualifications or above, the remaining four are currently on their PTLLS course which is due for completion by the end of April. The staff have also completed key skills tests at level 2, however, to deliver Functional Skills more effectively, especially where they have got to build up learners skills and knowledge, level 3 in Maths and English would be required. Valkyrie actively encourage and support their staff to gain level 3. In fact all of the teaching staff will be taking the functional skills assessment – this is crucial to enable full understanding of what will be required of the learners. These additional requirements will be discussed and documented on the staff development plans and action dates set. Moreover, all staff development activities will be recorded in their CPD which will show how their skills and knowledge have been updated and developed.

In the long term there are plans for staff to gain DTLLS and the Additional Diploma in Maths and English. Valkyrie recognises that Professionalization of the workforce is a key element of quality provision.

**Intended impact**

The impact of the LSIS support will be threefold:

* to prepare staff with sufficient skills and understanding to deliver functional skills from September
* to offer an embedded approach to functional skills
* to offer a meaningful qualification which will prepare learners for the work environment and in society

**Any tips**

* Set clear objectives, which are regularly reviewed
* Although it is early days the overriding factor which is fundamentally important is the enthusiasm and commitment of the whole organisation – Valkyrie has this in abundance!