

Key Training

The drive to improve efficiency in Apprenticeships delivery – doing more with less

Case study



About Key Training

Established in 1965, Key Training is a national independent provider of vocational training, with 10 offices in England. It has over 100 staff delivering to approximately 2000 learners on pre-employment, Apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes. In its 2010 Ofsted inspection it was awarded a Grade 2, with a contributory Grade 1 for the partnerships it has built with employers.

Ten members of the team have been actively involved in the Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme, including members of the senior management, account management and training delivery teams. The involvement has been driven by the Regional Director for the north east and the Training and Quality Director.¹

Starting point

The driver for applying for support from the SER programme was to identify opportunities to reduce inefficiencies in the business while maintaining or improving quality. Although Key Training has confidence in the quality of its provision, it recognises that in a climate of reduced funding there are opportunities to 'work smarter'.

Through working with the peer adviser to complete a development plan, this initial aim became more focused. In order to maximise

the SER programme support offer they decided to:

- identify and act on changes that can be made to the sign-up process for Apprenticeships to reduce existing inefficiencies;
- increase awareness of the Training Quality Standard (TQS) and its potential application within the business to improve the consistency of approach to working with employers.

Support to achieve these goals ran in parallel with a Leadership in Technology (LIT) project supported by LSIS to reduce inefficiencies in the Apprenticeship delivery model. The LIT project focused on revising the Apprenticeship delivery model by using technology to support delivery of quality remote assessment by telephone and web. Learning was shared between the two initiatives and the change management involved in the end-to-end process was coordinated.

The SER programme has been of value because of the mixture of sharing good practice with other providers experiencing similar issues and one-to-one support offered by the peer adviser.

Regional Director

¹ This resource was produced for the LSIS Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme. It was current at April 2011.

Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme

Using the SER programme

Key Training found the SER programme valuable because of the mixture of sharing good practice with other providers experiencing similar issues and one-to-one support offered by the peer adviser. The adviser helped the team to develop a workable plan, improve the capacity of a cross-section of departmental staff to manage internal processes more effectively, and champion the TQS framework as a good foundation for building a model of good practice within the business.

Members of the team attended master classes and Peer Exchange Groups (PEGs) including the 'Reducing inefficiencies in Apprenticeships' master class and associated PEG, and the 'Encouraging employers to buy' PEG.

The support provided by the adviser included two continuing professional development (CPD) sessions alongside the advisory support. The first allowed a cross-functional group to map the current sign-up process. The second with the same group identified practical improvements that could be made to the process and agreed responsibilities and next steps.

"I found mapping how we do things, discussing the regional variables and defining customer values really beneficial. Having the seed planted of how much waste we have in our processes but knowing we have the potential to make a difference is encouraging. It's our business, so therefore it's our solutions that matter!"

Sales Manager

The peer adviser worked with the senior team to develop a cycle of ongoing process improvement for the business.

There was a further session with the account management team introducing the TQS framework to establish some links between a potential employer journey and the processes being mapped. Activity is under way to

formulate a plan to develop the principles of the TQS as the business norm for working with employers.

Key Training invested heavily in time and travel to ensure that all their offices benefited from their involvement in the SER programme. The team met regularly, outside the days when the SER adviser was involved, to progress the actions.

Outcomes

Key Training intends to make major changes to its operating practices as a result of its involvement in the SER programme and has already started. The members of staff who attended the CPD sessions are now referred to as the Business Improvement Group (BIG) to ensure the learning and work undertaken in the sessions is carried forward with a core group of staff.

Four streams of work were identified as a result of mapping the sign-up process. Each has a project team assigned to work on it, and the first review session took place on 1 March, where each project team presented to the wider Business Improvement Group on progress and next steps.

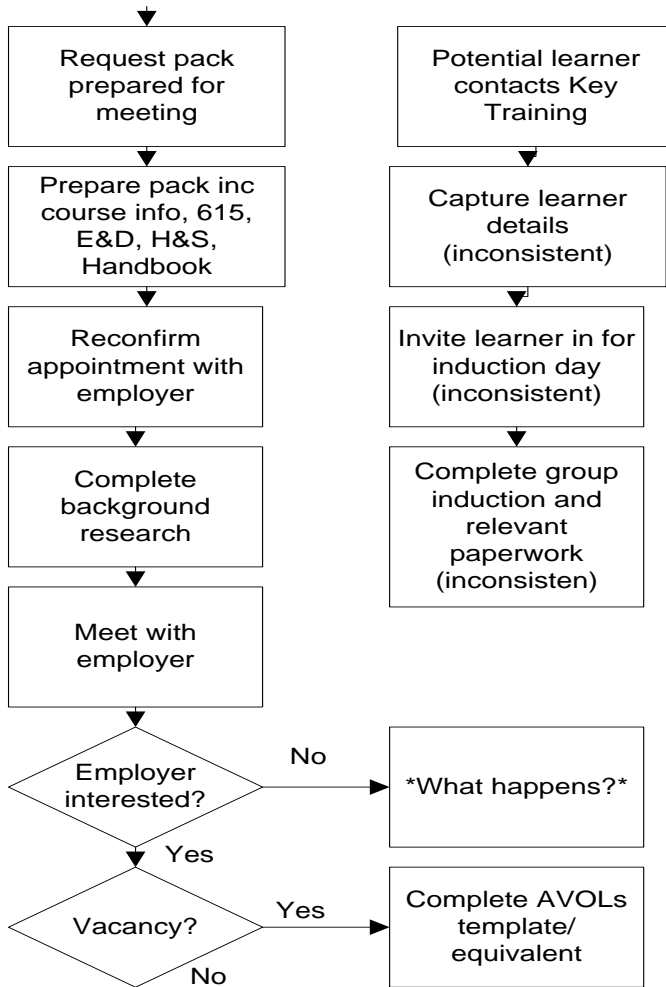
The four streams are:

- Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRMS) – analysis of the gap between business requirements and existing system capabilities
- Reduction in sign-up paperwork, to improve accuracy and timeliness of completion
- Determining process management infrastructure and the continuous improvement plan; and
- Reduction in time delay between sign-up and commencement of delivery.

The account management team will also use a team day in March to present back their learning about the TQS and make recommendations for use of the framework within Key Training.

Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme

'Brown paper' process



Don't...

- Jump into 'fix it' model too quickly! You will miss opportunities to make meaningful change if you move past focusing on understanding the issues in hand.
- Underestimate the investment of time it will need to bring about change. Plan to involve the right people beyond any initial process-mapping exercise.
- Just think about TQS for the purposes of accreditation. Start by looking at the framework to inform what you do and improve it for the better. If your efforts result in recognition, all the better.

Future support

The involvement of an external adviser to ensure that the activity remains on track is invaluable. It is often difficult to see past the day job to focus on long-term change so a continued relationship would be of real value. External expertise to support the business in achievement of the TQS framework has also been identified as a requirement.

Advice for other providers

Do...

- Involve a cross-representational group of staff when you are process-mapping.
- Use the visual technique of mapping on a wall with sticky notes. It keeps everyone engaged and ensures a common understanding of what is being captured.
- Ensure you have the buy-in of employees who have the ability to bring about change. It would be frustrating to invest time in this type of exercise, and then not be able to do anything about the issues.