

Reinvigorating Curriculum Design

Case Study



Project title: Engaging employers in the assessment of employability skills

Strode College is working with employers to encourage their engagement in the development and assessment of employability skills to better prepare prisoners from HMP Leyhill for eventual release and future employment.

Worth reading if you are interested in:

- Prisoner employability
- Employer engagement
- Developing employability skills

Contact information

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Participating organisation(s):

Strode College, HMP Leyhill

What the project set out to do and why

Strode College currently delivers an employability skills programme in a number of South West prisons as part of its Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contract.

This project set out to involve employers in the development and assessment of employability skills in the workplace and thus better support progression to further study or work when the prisoner is released.

To achieve this, the project planned to:

- involve employers in the design of the assessment process, making them more aware of the skills that they can develop within their wider workforce;
- support learners to learn more effectively and help them to understand the value of the skills and qualifications they achieve and so increase retention, achievement and encourage further study;
- enhance the college tutor's understanding of the workplace to enable them to better support learners.

What the project has achieved so far

The project has established links with the prison resettlement department, two employers who currently employ prisoners on released on temporary licence (ROTL) and four ROTL prisoners. The project lead has worked closely with the employers to make them more aware of the skills they can develop with their workforce and how they can contribute to the assessment of these skills.

Strode College tutors visit the employees at their workplace every week to discuss their progress. The employers appreciate this regular contact with tutors and have been contributing to the formal assessment that captures progress in the workplace.

One employer has now agreed to take on an additional three learners from the prison as they recognise that this assessment could form the basis for an induction programme for new employees and help determine whether further employment beyond the initial twelve week period is a possibility.

"I can see this programme working well with new recruits. It means that I can give them an induction into the workplace and also show them what I expect. It gives me something to measure them by."

(Employer)

As a result of the contact with the College, one employer has enquired about other training for prisoners that could be delivered through the College, specifically, training to drive a 7.5 ton lorry and opportunities for fork-lift truck training.

Tutors report that learners/employees are motivated by the programme and appreciate the individual attention they receive from the tutor and the opportunity to discuss their work.

"I am quite enjoying the programme and it gets me to focus on things. For example, I started a new job on the baler and I have really focused on Health and Safety and thinking about the tasks I am doing."

(Learner/employee)

"I have done other work before at HMP Bullingdon in the Taylors and Laundry area and as a SEG orderly. This programme would be really useful in all of these work areas."

(Learner/employee)

"It is particularly good when you are given a new task as there is a lot to then complete and think about."

(Learner/employee)

As a result of regular meetings with the employer and the learners/employees, the tutors now have a better understanding of what can be assessed in the workplace and this is reflected in revisions to the assessment log. Originally, employees were assessed on punctuality. However, this is usually out of the employee's control as they

do not travel independently to work. Employees will now be assessed on broader time management skills.

As each employee has their own particular learning needs, the personalised one-to-one tutor input enables them to discuss which skills they would like to focus on and this has begun to have an impact on their behaviour, not just at work but also when they return to the prison from day release.

"I can really see the benefits of this work skills programme for both employees and employers. After a few weeks, they become really engaged in the process and they both value the extra interaction they have with each other. It is helping the employee to become more focused on developing their employability skills and the employer to find a non-threatening forum to feed back positively to employees and to discuss areas that they would like to see the employee develop."

(Tutor)

The project manager has begun discussions on how to enhance the programme by capturing the work skills gained on the job that are not being formally assessed through an employability qualification. Individual learners and their tutor have identified the occupational and life skills that they are acquiring and have reflected on how these skills might influence future choices in terms of training and work.

The project has built better links between the Strode College management team and the prison resettlement team and this has led to increased communication and trust between them. They have liaised with prison management to ensure that all parties are aware of the actions taken.

What the project still needs to do

- Continue to support the learners to gain an accredited qualification. The tutors expect the portfolios to be completed by April. Work on portfolios has taken longer than anticipated as the employees are not always available on the dates when they are scheduled to meet their tutor.
- Apply the lessons learnt from the project and the changes made to the assessment paperwork to the wider employability programme currently delivered within the prison. A standardisation meeting for all tutors will be organised in May to ensure that all are aware of the changes.
- Review the model of support provided to employees in the workplace. Currently, the tutor is scheduled to visit each employee at their place of work every week. While this has a significant impact on the employee, who appreciates the regular one-to-one contact, it is very labour intensive. The project is now looking at how some of the support might be delivered in small groups within the prison without losing the positive impact on the learner of individual support.

What the project wants to share with other schools, colleges and training providers

The following resources are available at the end of this case study:

- Work experience progress discussion sheet (used with tutor).
- Work experience weekly record sheet (used with employer),

Key learning points

- It is essential to have a designated project coordinator who is the main point of contact with all key stakeholders (the prison, employers and tutors).
- Where a project involves different organisations and individuals, timescales should reflect the differing priorities of these organisations and individuals and the time it takes to win the trust of the employee and the engagement of the employer.

Work Experience Progress Discussion Sheet

Employability Focus: _____

Week: _____

Dates: _____

Name: _____

ULN Number: _____

Candidate Reflection

What did you learn from the employability skills assignment?

How did you use this learning to help you with your employability focus this week?

What main work task/s did you do this week and what did you achieve?

What specific work skills did you use to complete the task/s?

What were the key incidents, lessons learnt and skills acquired?

What would you like to focus on next week and why?

Tutor Comments

Using feedback from the Instructor and discussions with the candidate:

Evidence of candidate development:

Agreed actions and focus for next week:

Candidate Signature: _____ Tutor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Work Experience Weekly Record Sheet

Name: _____

Week:	Dates:	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Overall
Managing time	Tasks are started quickly, independently, enthusiastically and achieved well within the time limits expected	O					
	Tasks are started quickly and are completed ahead of time expected.	G					
	Tasks are completed on time	S					
	Late or no completion of tasks	P					
Motivation & concentration	Very well motivated, clearly enjoys the work	O					
	Well motivated and enthusiastic	G					
	Motivated and usually concentrates	S					
	Poor motivation, loses concentration	P					
Attention to H&S in the workplace	Excellent awareness of H&S, reminds others	O					
	Good application to H&S rules	G					
	Understands H&S and follows rules	S					
	Poor understanding and needs reminding	P					
Manner & language	Excellent communicator all levels	O					
	Good communicator with clarity, tact & diplomacy	G					
	Able to communicate with clarity	S					
	Not always able to communicate with clarity	P					
Work independently	Works very well without supervision and helps directs work of others	O					
	Able to work without supervision	G					
	Works with some supervision	S					
	Cannot work independently, needs constant attention	P					
Interaction with Others	Excellent team worker, strives for team success	O					
	Works well in a team	G					
	Sometimes works well with others	S					
	Has difficulty working with others	P					
Quality of completing work related tasks	Excellent range of skills suited to the work	O					
	Tasks are completed to a good standard	G					
	Tasks are completed to a satisfactory standard	S					
	Tasks not all completed on time or of quality	P					