

Maximising learner achievement in challenging times

Supported provider: Highway Training Solutions
Improvement partner: Gail Lydon

About Highway Training Solutions

Highway Training is part of the Cordant Group PLC which has held a National Apprenticeship Service employer contract since April 2011. They transferred from the Employer Grant to a Training Provider Contract for Services. As a subcontractor Highway Training Solutions was inspected in late 2012. The inspection highlighted strengths including the following:

- learners demonstrate good workplace and employability skills which enable them to operate effectively and efficiently and carry out tasks to a high standard, often leading to sustained employment; and
- leaders have a good understanding of government priorities and have established strong controls to monitor compliance with funding body expectations.

These comments seemed to highlight the focus of the organisation: preparing their learners for employability, which was pleasing. Employers reported that their staff were well inducted into how they should operate. These employers had high expectations of employees' production and handling skills and the employees were able to apply health and safety procedures effectively.

However, the inspection report also highlighted a range of issues including the following:

- insufficient priority being given to learners' English and maths skills; and
- teaching staff skill: these knowledgeable and motivated staff were mainly experienced occupational specialists with extensive industry knowledge but not all had the skills and expertise to support English and maths.

What we wanted to achieve

Highway Training Solutions contacted LSIS in January 2013 for support to tackle the quality of their provision and to plan for rapid improvement. LSIS Improvement Advisor, Gail Lydon, was allocated to Highway Training Solutions to concentrate on the English and maths provision on offer. Several issues were identified:

- learners were based in centres all over the country;
- there was no clear picture of how each individual learner was progressing towards their full framework; and
- staff were concerned about their own levels of English and maths skills.

Implementation

What we did

The following changes were made:

- regular online meetings were held with all assessors;
- an action plan was drawn up to go through all learners' portfolios to check on progress;
- a spread sheet was drawn up collating the information about all learners covering the requirements of their framework including portfolio and test completions for the requirements of their frameworks;
- challenging targets were set for each assessor/trainer to check learner records and update them accordingly;
- further targets were set to support learners to achieve their full frameworks; and
- support was put in place for staff and learners alike to maximise completions in the demanding timescales; this included the introduction of a 'hit squad' made up of their most experienced practitioners and was used to provide quick and effective support when need was identified.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

"The support from LSIS has given the Senior Management Team clear definition, as to what we needed to prioritise in order to maximise learner achievement. The starting point for this was to understand our data and to identify where we could make the biggest impact, followed by setting clear and measured targets to delivery staff. Implementing these changes has driven a substantial increase in our overall framework success rates and particularly timely success."

Lindsay Brown, Head of Work Based Learning

Some difficult decisions had to be made but from the start the organisation was determined to support as many learners as possible to complete their frameworks. This was done by transferring some learners to other organisations and by using the most competent staff available to support learners to complete their programmes on a one to one and small group basis. Learner feedback has been positive.

"I felt a great sense of satisfaction and achievement, after not doing any formal studying for 20 years, to be able to complete my Key Skills Communication and Application of Number at Level 2".

Matt Dunstan, learner

Advice to others

- Do use your Ofsted report to make improvements.
- Do ensure you have staff with the skills required to support your learners.
- Do use initial assessment of English and maths to ensure that learners are on suitable level programmes of study.
- Data is the lifeblood of the business. Keep data up to date, encourage staff to take ownership, for example by setting them clear, SMART targets, and use centralised filing where appropriate.

Next steps for Highway Training Solutions

Future plans include the following:

- following a strategic review of funded apprenticeships, clear delivery sector subject areas have been defined where the business can have the greatest success;
- streamlining the structure of the organisation with greater focus on technology and subject specialists; and
- engaging with partners in order to offer a wider training provision to our staff which will include standalone qualifications, which could lead to achieving a full Apprenticeship framework.

Contact information

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