

Improving Apprenticeship delivery:

Provider Case Studies using the Apprenticeship Improvement and Development (AID) Tool



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Introducton

This publication contains a series of case studies, sharing the experiences of five Apprenticeship providers. They were part of a total of 30 providers who took part in an Apprenticeship Improvement Development (AID) pilot project between October 2009 and March 2010 which looked to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their delivery.

The publication includes:

- an overview of the AID pilot project including how efficiency and effectiveness of delivery can be measured
- a description of the methodology used
 - a) to collect provider data; and
 - b) how this data was used to allow providers to compare themselves with their peer group
- provider case studies which explain
 - a) why they chose to get involved with the AID pilot project
 - b) how they approached data collection
 - c) the emerging results from AID
 - d) proposed corrective action

The AID pilot project

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) commissioned the World Class Skills: Developing Responsive Provision (WCS) programme to design a methodology, which would support providers to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Apprenticeship provision.

Feedback from Apprenticeship providers indicated that they struggled to understand how their management and delivery of learning compared to similar providers and therefore how it might be improved. Providers felt that they could judge how **effective** their delivery was through the use of Individualised Learner Records (ILR) and statistical analysis of these, but were unable to judge their **efficiency** as they did not generally share how they differed in areas such as:

- How much time was spent on learner induction;
- What size caseloads assessors had; and
- How much time was spent on quality assurance and other regulatory functions, such as contract management and audit.

In order to allow providers to understand how they compared, the AID pilot project developed an activity analysis questionnaire, which collected data at both provider and individual staff level, some of which are shown in table 1 below.

To capture typical activities of staff time, the questionnaire asked staff to assign the average time they spent under one of eight key processes:

- **Pre programme activity**
marketing to learners and employers
- **Learner sign up and induction**
including learner diagnostic, Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and application processing
- **Programme delivery – away from the workplace**
classroom/workshop based support for main learning aims
- **Programme delivery – in the workplace**
including work based assessment and learner review
- **Programme delivery – other**
E.g. preparation of learning materials, travel, desk based evaluation
- **Exit management – (of learners)**
Including learner IAG, certification processing, exit interviews
- **Quality assurance and performance management**
E.g. audit and contract management
- **Planning and support**
Such as strategy and business planning, staff management and training.

The activity analysis questionnaire is broken down further into sub processes; a full list is shown in annex 1.

Table 1. Examples of activity data collected at provider and staff level

Provider level	Individual staff level
Provider type, eg, FE college, Independent Training Provider (ITP);	Job title;
Total number of learners;	Staff working patterns, such as full time, part time or term time working;
Total number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff employed;	Individual learner caseloads for Apprenticeships and other programmes;
Total number of staff who work with Apprenticeships;	Sectors they deliver;
Job roles and number of assigned staff; and	Contracted weekly hours and average actual hours worked; and
Learner numbers by sector subject areas (SSA) and by Apprenticeship / Advanced Apprenticeship.	Time spent on activities in a typical working pattern.

Methodology

Providers involved with the AID pilot project attended a briefing workshop to be issued with the questionnaire and to understand how to complete it¹. In order to maintain momentum providers were asked to complete and return their questionnaires within three weeks. This timeframe was set to maintain focus whilst recognising the level of detail and practicalities of staff being available alongside day to day operations.

Once returned, all data sets were loaded into an AID master document (known from this point forward as the AID tool or the 'tool'). Individual data reports were given back to providers together with comparisons of their own level of activity against that recorded by their peer groups². Comparisons showed results as either a percentage of time spent on activity, or by the calculated 'average hours per learner.'

The results were discussed with each provider to facilitate their interpretation and to establish if a specific delivery model accounted for unusually high or low activity in certain process categories.

Providers also reviewed their ILR³ data against the activity analysis results to show where high or low levels of activity could be influencing their effectiveness of delivery. For example, where low levels of staff time spent on induction (as identified through the activity analysis) were combined with a high level of learners with low prior attainment (identified through their ILR results), this led to a higher proportion of learners leaving the programme within the first six weeks of learning.

Areas for further review were addressed through the delivery of a facilitated two-day workshop. All workshops produced an implementation plan with specific measurable targets and responsibilities.

¹ A user guide is now available to help providers complete the questionnaire, available from <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser>

² The AID peer referencing is based on organisational type and sectors delivered. As such, each provider has a unique peer reference based on their individual choices.

³ ILR Data 07/08 was used during the pilot. Specific ILR data sets were produced for each provider, these data sets calculated information at main learning aim level and showed details of prior attainment levels, age, ethnicity and gender amongst others. Data has since been updated and replaced with 08/09 ILR.

Case study A: CWT Chamber Training

ITP/FE college/Other	Independent Training Provider (Chamber of Commerce)
Location	Coventry (West Midlands)
Size of organisation	1524 employer responsive learners (2008/09)
Provider contact details (email address)	lucas.s@cwtcov.co.uk
Provider website	www.cwtcov.co.uk

CWT Chamber Training (CWT) is a work based learning provider delivering both commercial and government funded training to employers. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce. Apprenticeships account for 85% of CWT's delivery. The Apprenticeship provision is delivered in nine occupational areas that include accountancy, business administration, hairdressing, child care and retail.

Reason for participation

In 2009 The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) awarded CWT grade 2s (good) in most categories. The business was, however, keen to become an 'outstanding' provider. CWT saw that the AID tool might help to improve their Apprenticeship provision as it could:

- Help to identify where current practices associated with delivery could be improved and where processes that do not add value to the learner or the employer could be minimised. This would release time and resources that could be refocused towards quality improvement; and
- Provide an innovative approach to improving quality within the organisation that included a wide range of staff at all levels. This would increase the probability that staff were committed to any change.

How CWT completed the AID activity analysis questionnaire

CWT focused on one of the areas where achievement rates were high, namely, Business Administration and an area of provision where they felt they were in need of most improvement with lower achievements rates, Early Years Care. This allowed CWT to:

- See how a strong performing area might be improved (i.e. not just focus on poorer performing areas); and
- Directly compare and contrast the processes within each of these sectors to identify differences in procedures and approaches. This was with a view to helping them share existing good practice across the organisation.

CWT approached the collection of staff data questionnaires by:

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) taking responsibility for the activity, sending a strong message that this was important;
- Agreeing that all job roles related to Apprenticeship delivery were represented at an internal (group) briefing to ensure that each element of the activity categories was fully understood by those completing the questionnaire;
- Staff completing their individual questionnaires at the end of the internal briefing session. This ensured that any uncertainties or questions raised were answered to the whole group, bringing consistency to responses; and
- Using a sample of staff to reduce the time involved, e.g. four assessors completed the questionnaire as a representation of 30 assessors (13%).

This methodology proved successful as it took the group only 45 minutes to complete their questionnaires. CWT felt this to be an effective approach as it was a small investment of time for the completeness of the data that was collected.

Outputs from the activity analysis

When comparing the data outputs against the peer group, areas of high or low activity were discussed and those without obvious reason were then highlighted for further review. A selection of these is shown in table 2 below.

A two day workshop was delivered by the WCS team to a wide range of CWT staff (such as Administrators, Assessors, Management), with a focus on identifying barriers and issues leading to more time being spent on pre-sign up activities, induction and learner progression. CWT were confident that if they could reduce the time spent on these activities, this would release key staff to focus on improving course quality.

Table 2. Summary of key outputs from the activity analysis

Key activity	CWT results	Peer results	Implications
Pre-programme activities	15.5% of staff time spent on these activities.	11% of staff time spent on these activities.	Efficiencies could be found as more time is spent on this activity than the peer average.
Learners leaving within the first six weeks of programme (data from ILR)	1.5%	3.3%	This may suggest that the pre-programme time is well spent. Further exploration is required to see whether the pre-programme time is genuinely efficient and effective.
Learners leaving early after the first six weeks (data from ILR)	7%	13%	As above, pre-programme activity may be causing this better than average outcome. However, CWT were keen to understand why 7% of learners left without completing their programme.

Table 3. Key issues identified and solutions

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Recruitment	There were three different learner start packs in operation for different course types, each containing unused forms. This resulted in assessors and other staff wasting time and unnecessarily preparing documentation.	CWT produced two specific 'new' learner start packs (16 – 18 and 19+) which contain the essential documentation for these new learner groups. This reduced printing time and the level of pack inventory.
Induction	CWT delivered the learner induction in three parts. There was duplication and this was confusing for both staff and learners. There was no single co-ordination point for inductions. Some learners did not receive induction to the programme on time (eg after their first workplace visit).	CWT undertook a full review of induction processes and information to remove duplication. This eliminated the confusion and reduced the staff time taken to undertake the process. Learners now also benefit from a more streamlined process. Assessors accepted responsibility for learner induction within 4 weeks of their start date to ensure early safety and course understanding. This in turn would reduce the number of leavers within the first six weeks.
Progression	Learners who progressed from Level 2 to Level 3 were required to repeat most of the process for 'new learners'. The sales and marketing team became involved which unnecessarily added to their workload and caused frustration for the learner who wanted to be inducted onto the new programme quickly.	Assessors agreed to identify learners who could progress prior to completing their programme. They would then start the completion of paperwork directly with central administration support. This change would stop the need for sales and marketing team involvement and improve the progression journey for the learner.

Since the workshop, CWT has used a similar approach to make further improvements to learner visits. Previously, learner visits were planned at the beginning of the programme but a culture within the provider meant that learner visits could be changed and rearranged and that 'as many visits as needed to the learner' was an acceptable level of service. The number of learner visits are now fixed at the commencement of training, and whilst the dates can be rearranged to provide flexibility, approval is now required for additional visits. This has reduced CWT's cost of delivery.

Top tips for working with the AID tool

CWT identified the following tips for providers wishing to benefit from AID:

- Have the process sponsored by top management to ensure that staff understand the importance and there is sufficient authority to enable change;
- Involve a range of personnel from administration staff to management to capture all staff time input into delivery;
- Prepare staff to complete the questionnaire through using group sessions. This enables a consistent approach to data collection and timely achievement; and

- Invite a wide-range of staff to the workshops to involve them with identifying issues and solutions. This will give them ownership of the process and of the implementation plan.

“The AID project enabled CWT to take a holistic review of our approach to recruitment and the initial period of learning, recognising this to be a critical time in ensuring that effective foundations are put in place that contribute to learners' success. Through the project, we reflected and evaluated our activities and the impact different roles within the organisation had to play in ensuring that learners get off to a good start.”

Sally Lucas – Chief Executive Officer

Case study B: SouthBankTraining Ltd

ITP/FE college/Other	Independent Training Provider
Location	Lincolnshire (East of England)
Size of organisation	70 employer responsive learners (2008/09)
Provider contact details (email address)	sue.bloomfield@southbanktraining.co.uk
Provider website	www.southbanktraining.co.uk

Background

Established in 1999, SouthBankTraining Ltd (SBT) is a private training company providing recruitment, training and assessment services. The company delivers Apprenticeships in construction, planning and the built environment, retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law. The provider has training centres in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Barton.

Reason for participation

SBT wanted to become involved with the AID pilot because:

- They had an area with low achievement and wanted to understand this; and
- It would give an opportunity for all staff buy-in, as it would involve a full range of staff, from administrators to managers.

How SBT completed the activity analysis questionnaire

The managing director asked senior managers to work with relevant staff from different sector areas to help them complete the questionnaire. Overall, SBT were able to collect questionnaires for all of their Apprenticeship staff. This approach enabled the staff to be:

- Introduced to the AID questionnaire;
- Taught how to complete it;
- Able to ask questions and discuss their thoughts with their peers; and
- Supported in completion by the senior manager to ensure consistency of approach (i.e. the staff had the same understanding of the different activity categories).

Outputs from the activity analysis

Areas of high or low activity, compared against peer results, were discussed and chosen for further review. A selection of these can be found in table 4.

Table 4. Summary of key outputs from the activity analysis

Key activity	SBT results	Peer results	Implications
Application processing, matching and registration	7 annual hours per learner	4 annual hours per learner	The administrative processes around sign-up activity may be inefficient.
Induction programme	8 annual hours per learner	3 annual hours per learner	The time spent on induction was significantly higher than the peer group and suggested that some efficiencies could be made.
Employer engagement – away from the workplace	3 annual hours per learner	1 annual hours per learner	Time spent liaising with employers was higher than the peer group – SBT wanted to understand if this was an effective use of time.

Based on the AID data results, SBT agreed to focus their workshop on the processes undertaken between a learner / employer and SBT.

By asking the staff to map out the Apprenticeship delivery process, the following issues emerged:

SBT are currently following through their implementation plan and report that it has resulted in staff working closer together. SBT believe that the improved staff interaction is supporting the successful implementation of change.

Table 5. Key issues identified and solutions

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Induction	During the induction process learner information was recorded more than once. This wasted staff time and resources.	Review the induction process to ensure the elimination of duplication and the tightening of the induction materials and delivery.
Learner interviews	Learner interview waiting times were too long, meaning that some learners may choose to attend an alternative provider.	Learners complete an initial assessment and application form and are then given an appointment for a one-to-one interview on the same day.
Employer engagement	A lack of knowledge on the behalf of employers with regard to the range of services and programmes offered.	Copies of prospectus carried by assessors to aid discussion and improve referral rates to all programmes.
Other delivery	PICS (the learner data system) is updated regularly by the use of movement sheets completed by staff . Efficiencies could be gained by staff inputting information for their own caseload.	For audit purposes the learner movement sheet has been combined with Staff Travel Claim. This ensures learner information is captured and is available to audit against PICS.

Top tips for working with the AID tool

- When completing the activity analysis tool work with staff to ensure consistency in their responses (i.e. that they have the same understanding of what the questions are asking them);
- Ideally, get the staff completing the questionnaire together as this will reduce the total time it will take to complete the questionnaire;
- Be prepared to answer staff questions about completing the activity analysis questionnaire, especially what it is and why it is being used, to provide clarity and reassurance; and
- Set out the benefits to the staff of undertaking the data collection exercise to get their buy-in and ownership of the outcomes.

“The AID pilot was a useful exercise for all staff involved as it enabled them to take ownership of their own roles – and the associated improvements required – whilst also giving an insight into the depth and extent of other roles involved in Apprenticeship delivery”.

Sue Bloomfield – Managing Director

Case study C: Bournville College

ITP/FE college/Other	FE College
Location	Birmingham (West Midlands)
Size of organisation	158 employer responsive learners (2008/09)
Provider contact details (email address)	jennifer.johnson@bournville.ac.uk
Provider website	www.bournville.ac.uk

Background

Bournville College is a large general further education (GFE) college based in South West Birmingham. They deliver Apprenticeships in business and administration, early years care, health and social care, catering and hospitality and customer services, horticulture, hairdressing and rail engineering

Reason for participation

During 2009, as part of its strategy to increase both the quality of delivery and Apprenticeship volumes the college introduced a new role, which would champion Apprenticeship programmes throughout the college. The AID project proved to be a timely opportunity for the college and to the newly appointed champion to complete a 'stock take' of the way Apprenticeships were delivered. Specifically the college wanted to achieve:

- A full understanding of how staff spent their time delivering Apprenticeship provision;
- A statistical overview of their Apprenticeship provision; and
- An understanding of how they compared against their GFE peer group to identify areas that they could improve based on similar organisations.

How Bournville College completed the AID activity analysis questionnaire

The college collected its activity analysis questionnaire data from specified areas of the college involved with Apprenticeships. Distributed to staff by email, the questionnaire was returned by administration staff in the set timeframe, but was not received back from all teaching staff. As a result, the project sponsor completed the questionnaire on behalf of the nil returns. The college recognised that having to estimate teaching staff responses meant that the data might not be as accurate as if the staff had completed it themselves.

Outputs from the activity analysis

Key points of interest and which were identified for further reviewed are shown in table 6.

Table 6. Summary of key outputs from the activity analysis

Key activity	Bournville results	Peer results	Implications
Pre application support	17 % of staff time spent on these activities.	10 % of staff time spent on these activities.	Bournville appeared to spend a high proportion of time compared to their peers on pre-application support (marketing to learners and employers and undertaking application processing, matching and registration). They were unsure why this was and wanted to try to make these administration-heavy processes more efficient.
Sign-up and induction	9 %	3 %	Sign-up and induction time was markedly higher than the peer group, suggesting that they may be able to find efficiencies in this area.
Learner support	6 %	17 %	There were low levels of learner support compared to the peer group, however, this reflects the lack of Additional Learner Needs support required at Bournville College, and may be a direct contribution to why achievement rates are, on average, lower than that of their peers.

As Bournville College’s goal was to increase learner and employer numbers whilst increasing the quality of learning, the college decided that they would use their two day workshop to review their administrative processes to ensure that they could cope with a higher throughput of learners and employers.

The objectives of the two day workshop were to:

- Ascertain the flow of paperwork / computer inputs that take place in the ‘administration’ process; and
- Review how employer engagement and curriculum teams input into the overall process.

Table 7. Key issues identified and solutions

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Administration	<p>There was no standardisation of administrative procedures and processes which caused confusion to staff and delays to enrolling learners, leading to delayed funding.</p> <p>Different sector teams within Bournville used different versions of documentation, creating confusion for administration staff leading to errors inputting data.</p>	<p>Bournville plan to review this in more detail (at a later date) with a view to reducing the number of steps involved with administration and clarifying the processes with staff.</p> <p>Introduce a consistent and referenced (i.e. each document has a code letter / number) set of documents for all sector teams.</p>
Employer engagement	<p>The employer engagement team lacked the detailed programme knowledge to effectively promote Apprenticeship programmes, leading to lower sales levels.</p>	<p>The college will develop documentation for each framework which will be used by the employer engagement team. The team will receive a briefing on this.</p>
Learner journey	<p>There was duplication of effort as 'paper based' and computer based systems operated in parallel leading to wasted time and resources.</p>	<p>The college will make greater use of its electronic learner record, stopping the use of duplicated paper based documents.</p> <p>The college also arranged to discuss audit requirements with the Skills Funding Agency, with a view to agreeing where they can reduce levels of paper based documentation.</p>

In addition to the specific issues above, Bournville College also identified further generic issues which they intend to address:

Table 8. Additional issues identified

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Communication	<p>The physical location of staff involved with the delivery and administration of Apprenticeships meant that communication among staff was not as strong as it should be.</p>	<p>Agreed to formalise all processes for passing of learner information, and introduce regular staff meetings to improve communication.</p>
Use of Technology	<p>The college has already introduced the electronic learner record system and staff working with the system found that it makes information from learner reviews more readily available. However, many administrative processes were still too reliant on paperwork.</p>	<p>Provide staff with training and briefings to ensure that the technology is used to the maximum benefit of the college.</p>
Transition to Functional Skills	<p>The staff believed that the migration from Key Skills to Functional Skills would be challenging for a number of learners, leading to reduced completions and timely completion rates.</p>	<p>The college will adapt, strengthen and enforce the entry requirements for Apprenticeships to ensure all learners can achieve their functional skills.</p>

Top tips for working with the AID tool

- It is essential to utilise the AID user guide to ensure that staff know how to apportion their time correctly and how to convert hours of time spent into percentages. This will enhance the reliability of responses.

“The consultancy and workshops came at the right time for our team and service and provided us with an objective look at how we deliver our programmes. It left us with a sense of new direction to grow our business in an effective and efficient manner (especially with all the external drivers affecting service delivery).

“The AID process provided us with a statistical perspective to benchmark how we engaged and deliver Apprenticeships for all our communities.”

Jennifer Johnson – Apprentice Programmes Manager

Case study D: On Site Bristol

ITP/FE college/Other	Independent Training Provider
Location	Bristol (South West)
Size of organisation	373 employer responsive learners (2008/09)
Provider contact details (email address)	Darren.Perkins@bristol.gov.uk
Provider website	www.onsitebristol.co.uk

Background

On Site Bristol (OSB) was established in 1996 by Bristol City Council to help local people take advantage of opportunities in the construction industry. The organisation acts as a managing agency, focusing on pre-apprenticeship activity and the progress and pastoral support to learners. City of Bristol College (CoBC) deliver the teaching and assessment on behalf of OSB under a sub-contracting arrangement.

Reason for participation

- OSB believed that AID would help them improve their Ofsted grade from 'good' to 'outstanding', through helping to redirect resources away from administration towards quality; and
- OSB saw AID as a way of getting all of their team involved in driving forward the business and felt that this buy-in was essential for sustainable growth.

How OSB completed the AID activity analysis questionnaire

On Site Bristol completed the activity analysis questionnaire for their entire Apprenticeship provision. OSB had a small number of staff and the management team realised that the activity analysis was a way of ensuring that all of the team was involved in driving forward the business. The activity analysis was completed in pairs, based on matched job roles, which meant that staff could discuss any queries about completion of the analysis with a colleague.

Outputs from the activity analysis

Table 9 shows the key areas of interest as identified by OSB.

Table 9. Summary of key outputs from the activity analysis

Key activity	On Site Bristol results	Peer results	Implications
Learner support	23 % of staff time spent on these activities.	27 % of staff time spent on these activities	OSB anticipated this low activity as they felt their peers would provide additional support in relation to off the job training. However, at 23 % this still appeared high and they wanted to know why.
Administration	8 %	13 %	Lower levels of administration than the peer group either suggested efficient administration processes or reflected the fact that administration levels were reduced due to the high levels of subcontracting.
Managing subcontractors	2 %	0 %	This reflected the proportion of outsourced provision (CoBC deliver all off the job training) and the organisation's active approach to managing its relationship with CoBC.

OSB arranged for staff which completed the questionnaire to attend a two day workshop to investigate further the results of activity analysis. The workshop took place on two consecutive days and all of the OSB team in Bristol attended along with selected members of CoBC.

Table 10. Key issues identified and solutions

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Learner data	<p>In some framework areas training officers (who look after the learner programmes) found it difficult to access learner data. This was in part because CoBC tutors took personal responsibility for the maintenance of learner data and there were no standardised processes. These tutors did not always understand the role of OSB and were therefore not always helpful in providing data.</p> <p>There was a lack of clarity over the process for initial assessments meaning that results were not always received in a timely manner. Realistic learner targets were therefore hard to set and learners did not always receive appropriate information, advice and guidance (IAG) or Additional Learning Needs (ALN) support.</p>	<p>OSB and CoBC will agree an effective process for learner tracking and ensure it is implemented across all frameworks in both organisations.</p> <p>CoBC agreed to change the way in which they provide OSB with initial assessment results. This will be reflected in the service level agreement (SLA) when it is reviewed and updated.</p>
Course information	<p>CoBC did not always provide key course details, such as timetables and schemes of work to OSB, making it hard to write individual learner plans. This could result in disjointed learning as it reduced the potential to synchronise the timetabling of technical certificates and NVQ training. This produced uncertainty for learners and employers. It also undermined the review process as training officers may have no benchmark against which to assess progress.</p>	<p>OSB will produce a timetable of information requirements to share with CoBC.</p> <p>OSB and CoBC have agreed that all 2010/11 course plans will be produced by the end of the 09/10 Summer Term.</p> <p>Performance related measures are to be included in the SLA.</p> <p>Introduce bi-monthly meetings with all programme coordinators (completed in April 2010).</p>

OSB are working towards completing the implementation plan and are planning to undertake the activity analysis a second time later in 2010 as part of their self assessment process.

Top tips for working with the AID tool

- Fully brief staff before completion of the activity analysis to ensure they understand how to complete the questionnaire;
- Get a good level of staff involvement in the workshops to maximise staff buy-in and ensure that a 'grass roots' understanding of current processes is gained;
- When running the workshop make sure there is a facilitator to keep staff on track and steer them towards completion of tasks; and
- Invite partner organisations to help with finding solutions as this improves the effectiveness of the relationship.

“The AID process was straightforward, giving everyone in the On Site team an opportunity to reflect on their day-to-day activity, and prompting immediate discussion on change. The data produced provided a useful indication of the key areas of focus for improvement and also an opportunity to include a major sub-contractor in the consultancy activity.

“AID’s 2-day consultancy and workshop hit the right note for us. It was flexible enabling the involvement of partners and focused on the key areas of improvement identified by AID. The workshop helped us produce a major element of our Quality Improvement Plan giving staff real ownership of this.

“In overall terms On Site Bristol found AID an effective means of planning the change required to move to outstanding performance.”

Darren Perkins – Project Manager

Case study E: Preston College

ITP/FE college/Other	FE College
Location	Preston (North West)
Size of organisation	882 employer responsive learners (2008/09)
Provider contact details (email address)	JRobinson1@Preston.ac.uk
Provider website	www.preston.ac.uk

Background

Preston College is a General FE college based in North West England. Apprenticeship provision is relatively small with fewer than 300 learners.

The college has a dedicated employer responsiveness unit which acts as the link between employers, apprentices, and the college's classroom based provision. Apprentices are in-filled to existing college classes; however, dedicated assessors from within the employer responsiveness unit provide assessment and pastoral care to learners in the workplace.

Reason for participation

Preston College recognised that they had some difficulties with their Apprenticeship delivery after receiving a poor provider financial audit (PFA) and felt that the AID tool would:

- Help them to identify which of their management processes were not effective, and improve these areas;
- Identify how the college and employer responsiveness unit communicated and shared information on learners and their progress; and
- Provide them with WCS consultancy support to give an objective overview and provide additional expertise.

How Preston College completed the AID activity analysis questionnaire

The college work based learning (WBL) team met to raise awareness of the project and gain the buy-in and support of the Vice-Principal. For those who could not attend the meeting, the activity analysis was completed on a one-to-one basis with the AID project sponsor, who spent 10-15minutes on average with each staff member.

Outputs from the activity analysis

Those areas which showed high or low activity, compared to their peers were discussed and chosen for further review. A selection of these can be found in table 11 below.

Table 11. Summary of key outputs from the activity analysis

Key activity	Preston results	Peer results	Implications
Pre-application support	23 % of staff time spent on these activities.	16 % of staff time spent on these activities.	The marketing, interview and learner matching process may be inefficient.
Sign-up and induction	6 %	4 %	Some enhanced efficiencies within the sign-up and induction process may be possible.
Learner support	4.5 %	9 %	Lower levels of learner support may help to explain the lower success rates.
Quality and performance	23 %	15 %	A large emphasis is placed on quality and performance, suggesting that they may need to challenge the effectiveness of this time commitment.
Strategy and support	5 %	12 %	Strategy and support time is low. This may either need to be increased to help enhance success rates or it may reflect efficient processes in this area.

The college discussed the analysis and agreed that some of the differences between the college and their peers may be due to their delivery model being biased towards recruiting learners with a high ability or potential to succeed. The college still wanted to include a review of the sign-up process to see if efficiencies could be found, together with their broader administration processes. This became the focus of their workshop,

Table 12. Key issues identified and solutions

Key activity	Issues / barriers	Proposed solutions
Administration	<p>There was inefficiency in terms of incorrect paperwork being completed. This occurred because there was a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of guidance, with no clear college wide documentation policy; • Lack of understanding of the importance of the paperwork; and • Lack of accountability / ownership. There was a view that if a form is filled in incorrectly then someone else will rectify it, or internal audit will pick up on it. <p>There was duplication of registration forms across the college as different parts of the organisation had different information criteria.</p> <p>This resulted in daily delays, wasted effort and rework which caused frustration for both the college and the employer.</p>	<p>The college agreed to produce a clear set of procedures for all staff involved. They also plan to consolidate paperwork where possible. This will be supported by staff wide training on the new procedures.</p>
Sign-up	<p>To maximise resources and allow late starts, departments did not plan or inform the employer responsiveness unit of start dates.</p> <p>Because of this and the lack of additional learning needs (ALN) / additional learner support (ALS) information on start paperwork the correct funding was often not claimed.</p>	<p>Departments are to plan all learning in advance and inform the employer responsiveness unit when start paperwork is completed.</p> <p>All learners are to be flagged on the computerised learner information system if they require ALN/ASN support.</p> <p>Monthly monitoring meetings are to be introduced.</p> <p>The contracts admin team are to produce a smoother flow of paperwork.</p>

The group developed an implementation plan. This has been adhered to and staff have noticed a clearer process for the administration of Apprenticeship provision, particularly around the sign-up of the learner. The college is planning to complete the activity analysis questionnaire again later this year in time for the self-assessment report (SAR), to compare results against the previous analysis.

Top tips for working with the AID tool

- Adopt a consistent approach to completing the activity analysis, ensuring that staff are fully aware of the activity descriptions;
- Check for accuracy in completion of the analysis;
- Gain senior management team buy-in at the start of the data collection to add weight to the importance of completing the analysis on time.

“The AID tool enabled us to benchmark ourselves against our peers and analyse how staff use their time across the Apprenticeship provision.

“The expertise provided by World Class Skills was invaluable throughout our involvement in the AID project. Consultants helped us identify areas for improvement and advised on the implementation of new processes that enabled the college to streamline activities, resulting in efficiency improvements across our Apprenticeship administration processes.

“We believe in AID to the extent that the college has allowed one of our staff to become a sector deliverer so that we can help to spread the news of how effective AID can be.”

James Robinson – Business Development Officer

Annex 1: Activity descriptions

Table 13. Processes and sub processes used in the activity analysis questionnaire

Key activity	Activities	Description
Pre-Programme: Provider-led Promotion and Marketing Activity	Marketing to Employers	All activity relating to marketing to employers up to sign-up, AND all activity relating to developing an agreement to train, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and graphic design of communication material for external circulation, e.g. newsletters • Organising employer Organisational needs analysis and skills scan.
	Marketing to Learners	All activity relating to learner engagement prior to placement with an employer, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and graphic design of communication material for external circulation • Providing initial information, advice and guidance to learners • Interviewing the learner prior to offering a place • Arranging employer interviews prior to offering a learning place
Sign Up: Learner Sign-Up and Induction	Application Processing, Matching and Registration	All administrative activity relating to the placement of a learner with an employer and the registration process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirming employment • Matching of learners to employers • Administration of the registration process
	Learner Diagnostic	All activity relating to the initial assessment and diagnostic of the learner skills following sign-up, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One to one interviews or conversations • Formal assessments or tests
	Induction Programme	All activity relating to learner induction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group-based induction programmes • Individual inductions

Key activity	Activities	Description
Programme Delivery: In the Workplace	Delivery of underpinning knowledge for Key Skills – face to face on employer premises	All time spent on the provision of training or teaching for Key Skills in a classroom based environment or through one-to-one tuition. This relates to provision on employer premises only.
	Delivery of underpinning knowledge for Technical Certificate – face to face on employer premises	All time spent on the provision of training or teaching for the Technical Certificates in a classroom based environment or through one-to-one tuition. This relates to provision on employer premises only.
	Delivery of underpinning knowledge for NVQ – face to face on employer premises	All time spent on the provision of training or teaching for NVQ in a classroom based environment or through one-to-one tuition. This relates to provision on employer premises only.
	Work-based assessments and visits – face to face	All other time spent face to face with the learner in a work-based setting, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of the learner at the employer premises • Portfolio reviews • Meetings to assess progress • Meetings to provide informal support to the learner at work.
	Provision of targeted support – in the workplace	Any time dedicated to the provision of targeted support to learners, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to learners who are not progressing as expected, e.g. through evening classes or additional tutoring, mentoring and coaching. • Delivering planned additional support such as Skills for Life learning.
	Employer Engagement – in the workplace	All activity relating to ongoing employer engagement throughout the programme delivery, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of provider quality, e.g. through review of training logs, questionnaires etc. • Employer communication, e.g. regular meetings, forums etc.
Programme Delivery: Other	Delivery-related activity (except Travel)	All activity that contributes to the delivery of the programme or related administration, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of teaching sessions • Write-up of assessment notes • Desk-based evaluation of learners • Verification of portfolio evidence
	Travel	All time spent on work-related travel, excluding all time spent travelling between home and provider premises.
	Time spent on non-productive activity	Any time spent on non-productive activity, for reasons such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learner becoming unavailable at short notice • Incompatibility of different learner visit arrangements in the day, leading to gaps in the schedule • Duplication of work, for example rewriting assessments and reviews.

Key activity	Activities	Description
Exit Management	Learner IAG	Any time dedicated to the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance relating to the exit of the Apprenticeship Programme. This relates to both early exit and advice on completion of the Apprenticeship, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers advice and guidance • Destinations.
	Certification	Any administrative time spent on the issuing and awarding of certificates, including any time spent on collecting data relating to certification, e.g. destination data collection.
	Exit evaluations	Any time spent on evaluating the reasons for exit or performance of the Apprenticeship, particularly with regard to employer evaluations.
Quality Assurance and Performance Management	Performance Management and Audit	All activity relating to the regular evaluation of performance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal reviews of processes and performance • Quality assurance (including internal verification) • Regular staff meetings to discuss performance • All activity relating to external assessment and preparation.
	LSC-related information and contract management	Any data capture and administration relating to the provision of information to the LSC, or the management of the LSC contract.
	Management Information and Data Capture	All activity relating to the capture of data for internal and external management information purposes EXCEPT for all data submitted to the LSC for funding purposes. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data capture, maintenance and distribution of management information • Inputting data information to internal systems such as enrolment, registration, review, or assessment systems – unless these are used specifically to generate funding.
	Managing Change and Improvement	All project management activity resulting from identified performance issues, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement programmes and change management as a result of internal self-assessments or external inspections.

Key activity	Activities	Description
Planning and Support	Strategy Development and Business Planning	All time spent on the development of provider strategic plans and business planning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market analysis/demand analysis • Capacity analysis • Business planning • Curriculum development • Development of eLearning strategy.
	Staff Management and Training	All time dedicated to the management and development of provider staff, including time spent on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff reviews • Recruitment • Professional Development/Training/Industry secondments • Team Building.
	Finance	All time relating to the financial management and administration of the provider, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting and financial planning • Payments administration • Claims management.
	IT	All time dedicated to the management and administration of provider-specific IT systems, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems support • Staff helpdesk functions • Development of environments, e.g. eLearning.
	Procurement and Commissioning	All time dedicated to the procurement and commissioning of services and goods except for sub-contracting arrangement or management of the LSC contract. Activity includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing procurement strategies • Management of the tender process • Management.
	Assessment and management of sub-contractors	All activity relating to the assessment and management of sub-contracted provision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting • Undertaking health and safety checks • Ongoing quality control and contract management.
	Administration	All time dedicated to general administration, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary management and scheduling of visits • Completion and analysis of staff timesheets • Typing, note or minute taking • Dealing with general enquiries via phone, email, or face to face.