

Provider case study

Access Training

Moving from Entry to Employment to Foundation Learning

Introduction

Access Training East Midlands (ATEM) is a medium-sized, work-based learning provider operating across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and the East Midlands.

They currently offer NVQs in areas including driver training, health and social care, teaching assistants, animal care, retail, and Skills for Life, and work in partnership with the Nottingham Hairdressing Agency to provide hairdressing qualifications.

ATEM has been delivering Foundation Learning since August 2009 because they recognised the need for alternative provision for 14–19 year olds.

Aims

ATEM was working towards the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) aspiration for 30% of their Entry to Employment (E2E) learners to be on a Foundation Learning programme, with the final target of all E2E provision being converted to Foundation Learning in September 2010.

Approach

The E2E and vocational training manager led the introduction of Foundation Learning. She reviewed existing subject areas to identify those that would more easily transfer to Foundation Learning, and decided to start with Hairdressing and Animal Care.

ATEM had not previously offered ICT, so the programmes needed some restructuring to incorporate all three functional skills but they were keen to keep their existing PSD elements including citizenship, team building, communications and healthy eating. They decided to offer the Open College Network (OCN) stand-alone units to accredit the PSD element of the programme.

During this work ATEM liaised with other organisations and one tutor attended New College Nottingham for the day as part of their professional development to see how they were implementing functional skills.

In this introductory phase they did not involve the learners in the design of Foundation Learning but did keep them up to date with developments. The new Foundation Learning programme in childcare, for example, was developed in response to requests from learners and because it is an LSC priority area.

Vocational staff were involved in planning the programme, timetabling and planning theory sessions, and developing lesson plans and schemes of work. They also decided to frontload the PSD elements to engage learners, and supported the learners to build their portfolios.

The Foundation Learning tutor spent a day with the hairdressing vocational tutor and learners to developing a better understanding of the practical skills required – the chemicals used, mixing ratios, technical vocabulary, etc. He was then able to embed these elements into the functional skills classes.

The staff training officer involved with the project was also the organisation's QCF champion.

Impact

ATEM has found that the staff are now more enthusiastic about Foundation Learning: they have adjusted from E2E, which was not historically a qualifications-based programme, to Foundation Learning, which is.

They are building better relationships with local organisations, including schools, and are supplying training to a local nursery, which is also a vocational centre.

Although learners have not yet completed their programmes, internal verification shows that they are making positive progress and the Foundation Learning programme in childcare has had a positive response from the learners. Learners are enjoying all three elements – vocational, functional skills and PSD – of the programme because they can see the relevance of it all.

Lessons learned

Ensure that:

- appropriate work placements are available;
- senior management are committed;
- staff training in Foundation Learning, the QCF and the range of qualifications available is provided;
- vocational staff are involved in creating the programmes;
- learners are supported to build their portfolios as this increases their sense of ownership of their learning;
- the Foundation Learning qualifications catalogue is checked regularly.

Next steps

ATEM plans next to transfer their Elderly Care programme across to Foundation Learning. Placements may be an issue but they will launch a large marketing exercise in 2010 to counter this.

Once the programme pilot has finished, they will analyse achievement and feedback so far to re-evaluate their approaches and further develop initial assessment, marketing and review processes. They also plan to spend more time researching other awarding organisations.

ATEM continually evaluates the vocational areas they offer to ensure that they meet learners' needs and, if appropriate, they try to work with partners to do this. They are already liaising with potential providers of construction and of sports activities, and ultimately they would like to share 25% of their provision with other providers.

Contact

Lesley Oldershaw

Vocational Training Manager

Access Training East Midlands

96 Cliffe Road

Nottingham NG1 1GW

Email: Lesley.oldershaw@atem.co.uk

Tel: 01159 587257