

Apprenticeship completion rates

There is an interesting article in the Spring edition of Quality Improvement, the QIA journal, about a piece of research carried out to establish why Apprenticeship completion rates were poor and what could be done to improve them.

There is a link in the journal to the main report, which outlines the rationale, methodology, conclusions etc. and this can be viewed following this link:

http://excellence.qia.org.uk/pdf/94036-Final%20ReportWeb_re_3.0_20080103.pdf

The findings show some of the common perceptions of Apprenticeships and the fact that they are still viewed as being well below higher education and they can be expensive for employers to get involved in, but the major issue is the focus on the poor achievement of those young people on the programme. Two years ago, only one third of Apprentices successfully completed their course.

However, there have been significant increases in achievements since and the figures are still rising.

The research report is called "Assessing the reasons for improvements in Apprenticeship completions". It is based on feedback from 18 providers and the findings point to five main factors influencing the improvements. These factors are: recruitment processes; quality management and assurance systems; the reorganisation of programme delivery; employer involvement and staff reviews, recruitment, team building and ongoing professional development. None of this is new and it highlights basic principles for the delivery of a successful programme, but it is sometimes useful to revisit the basics to refresh what we are doing and ensure all learners are getting the best possible deal on our programmes.

Communication with learners is highlighted as key in the lead up to learners starting on the programme, making them more aware of what can be achieved and linking recruitment into referrals from partner organisations, screening prior to start to help with planning and support is also a major plus point.

Tailoring the programme to suit individual needs linking to both the learner and the employer and ensuring the employer is fully briefed and signed up to their responsibilities helps to lower drop out rates. The involvement of the employer is vital to keep the learner supported and motivated whilst at work and those that have a greater understanding of the programme tend to have more success in contributing to the progression of their learners.

The recruitment of staff from the sector, with experience of industry is valuable and careful positioning of administrative duties within the staff structure can be beneficial. Making sure trainers have enough time with their learners to identify and discuss potential issues plays a large part in keeping the learners on track and able to achieve.

All providers involved in the research agreed that the five factors above linked to an embedded learner-centred approach were essential in raising completion rates across the Apprenticeship programmes.

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