

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: FINAL CASE STUDY

Rate My Apprenticeship – Collaborative Project

West of England IoT (Weston College)

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Contents

- Rate My Apprenticeship**..... 3
 - Project Overview 3
 - Project Aims 3
 - Positive Impact and Expected Outcomes..... 4
 - Project Outputs..... 6
 - Future Activity..... 6
 - Recommendations for effective collaborative partnership working to address quality improvement in apprenticeship delivery. 6
 - Where can colleagues find more information? 7
 - Appendix 1 – Survey Results..... 8
 - Appendix 2 – ESFA Scoring Methodology 9



Rate My Apprenticeship

Project Overview

This project led by an established partnership already working together under the West of England Institute of Technology. It was led by Weston College (IoT lead) and included Bath College, Gloucestershire College, The University West of England, and Yeovil College. The project was developed to help Training Providers understand the Employer and Apprentice Surveys, the resulting TripAdvisor style ratings and what actions Training Providers could take to identify improvements to the quality of their apprenticeship provision by:

- Researching and understanding the surveys.
- Understanding how they were administered and when and who was completing the surveys.
- Understanding the scoring applied

This information would allow the Training Provider to make informed decisions on strategies to bring about improvements and ensure the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework measures did not fall into 'Needs Improvement' or 'At Risk'.

Project Aims

1. To understand the apprenticeship employer and learner surveys, how they are administered and how these surveys impact Training Providers
2. To conduct research on our provision and with our employers and apprentices to compare with the external survey results.
3. To improve staff knowledge of the surveys
4. To increase scores in one or both surveys for each partner organisation
5. To share best practice between project partners on the strengths and AFIs identified from the survey answers.
6. To identify, implement and review quality improvement actions to improve feedback ratings.
7. To undertake employer, apprentice research, and provide feedback to DfE/ESFA on survey administration and process.
8. To share the findings with other organisations through the IoT Network and regional Training Provider Networks.

Positive Impact and Expected Outcomes

The ultimate output of the project was to improve either or both the Employer and Apprentice survey results that form part of the ESFAs Apprenticeship Accountability Framework. We could not determine if this were successful for the employer survey due to it not being updated by DfE/ESFA (in the lifespan of the project April- September 2023). The learner survey has been updated during the same period. Please refer to the results in [Appendix 1](#)

From the results, the group identified a common issue with employer survey response to reporting apprentice progress to employers. One partner showed this as a strength, with the others as an area for improvement. A sub-group was formed to consider quality improvement actions. This resulted in several changes per provider, such as:

- Progress reviews have been changed both in duration, content, and delivery. One provider used the results of the survey to fundamentally change their reviews, embedding visual progress indicators in the reviews and automatically sending these to employers.
- Employer communication has been improved using technology and IT systems. Four of the five partners used Smart Assessor as an e-portfolio systems. The use of Power Automate to send system generated dynamic emails without the use of human intervention was setup.
- Improvements to initial assessment processes using new methods to identify learning disabilities and difficulties. The sharing of practice resulted in one provider improving the IA process by process mapping their improved IA process and adding in timelines to ensure funding rules English and maths requirements could be reduced to Entry level 3 where appropriate for LDD apprentices.
- Changes to staff responsibilities. One provider reviewed the responsibilities of their assessors and moved some of the administrative tasks to less qualified staff, resulting in higher face to face contact with apprentices.
- Advice and guidance to apprentices and employers changed due to the points above.
- Progress reports are sent to the apprenticeship digital account holder and the managers/mentors.

The results fed into organisation Quality Improvement Plans to track the implementation of improvement actions. These were split between Teaching and Learning actions and process actions. For example:

- Initial assessment processes were changed to gather information earlier, better informing starting points.
- The sequencing of programmes was changed due to learner and employer feedback from our research on considering previous learning.
- Changes to the setup of e-portfolios to produce better tracking and progress of apprentices result in better communication with learners and employers.
- Improvements to communication and the information provided to the employer's apprenticeship digital account holder.
- How apprentices and employers are supported and encouraged to access and complete the survey.

To aid effective communications, we used a dedicated SharePoint project site. The site included up to date information on the research being conducted, showing the number of responses to our own project surveys. It included key milestone dates to ensure the project remained on target,

along with key documents, such as monthly project reports, plans, budgetary information, news stories, policy documents, key websites and, importantly, meeting minutes and actions. The SharePoint site supported the communication between partners and ensured information was current.

The partnership included a HEI with a different perspective on apprenticeship delivery, using different systems and processes compared to colleges. This allowed for different perspectives to be shared and considered. The group will continue working together to benefit our stakeholder and apprenticeship programmes.

A Freedom of Information request to ESFA resulted in understanding how the provider scores were worked out and how providers were ordered when searches were made on Find an Apprenticeship Training Provider. See [Appendix 2](#)

The production of guidance and information given to staff, employers and learners provides guidance and information on the surveys and why they are asked for feedback. This has resulted in the following:

- A more balanced response from employers and learners instead of this being weighted to those more likely to want to share a negative experience.
- Increases the number of responses, which in turn improves the order of providers in the Find a Training Provider list (Appendix 2)
- Allows the project group to formulate and implement improvement actions specific to all apprentices, not just a minority of unhappy respondents.

The survey results were triangulated with other data from the research undertaken. For example, the Find an Apprenticeship survey results showed progress reporting was not good for four of the five partners. Our own survey using differently worded questions highlighted this as a strength. The main reason attributed to this difference is that the person the Find an Apprentice survey is sent to is the digital account holder.

The findings have been shared with several networks. The response from these was:

- The level of knowledge of the surveys was low (equates to Poor if apply the scoring the DfE/ESFA use)
- 69% of providers did not have a strategy for Find an Apprenticeship Surveys. Only 15% already had a strategy in place.
- A significant majority of providers did not know how to access the breakdown of the scoring for either survey.
- 96% will use the digital communication leaflets produced as a result of this project to support the increase of awareness to employers, apprentices, and provider staff.

Staff reported their understanding of the surveys resulted in the following:

- Staff who knew about the Find an Apprenticeship surveys increased from 65% to 95% because of the information shared because of the project.
- Staff who had reviewed the survey results increased from 36% to 48%
- Staff who knew when employers and apprentices were able to complete the survey increased from 52% to 75%

The impact of this for the partner training providers involved in the project resulted in all staff being able to communicate with employers and apprentices about the survey and to encourage both to

complete these in the future. As more staff are now informed of how often and when they can be completed, the action to balance the responses from employers and apprentices is easier to achieve, which should result in improved response rates and scores.

Project Outputs

1. Survey Strategy document and example quality improvement actions covering TLA and survey processes that apprenticeship providers can employ to improve ratings received by employers and apprentices.
2. Key information and guidance which outlines how data and information can be used to inform the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) quality improvement processes in line with Ofsted EIF outcomes and shared with other AWD collaborations, Independent Training provider (ITP) Networks, and the National Institute of Technology (IoT) Network.
3. A set of digital communications for employers, apprentices, and staff to improve their understanding, engagement, and completion of the surveys.
4. Presentation at dissemination events to other apprenticeship training providers to share the research and findings on the employer and apprentices survey policy, processes structures and results.

Future Activity

- Work with the business development team to ensure the Find A Training Provider website data is correct. The methodology for determining the score includes pass rate data. In some instances, we found this to be incorrect.
- Further Freedom of information (FOI) requests to understand if the three questions in the employer survey have an equal response weighting.
- Amendments to internal surveys to fully incorporate the Find an Apprenticeship employer and apprentice surveys.
- Support new employers and apprentices starting this academic year to understand and complete the surveys.
- Continue working with the project group to share best practice and continue the improvements in the individual statement results. Conduct further work when DfE/ESFA has updated the employer results.

Recommendations for effective collaborative partnership working to address quality improvement in apprenticeship delivery.

1. Develop a strategy that details a plan over the long term and short term to maximise the outcome and results of both surveys to achieve an excellent rating.
2. Communication space for sharing information is essential. The project used a SharePoint site that shared information and provided continual updates, key documents, and reference points.

3. Work in collaboration with other providers across a subset of different types of providers. Training Provider Networks are good facilitators of bringing these different types of providers together. Each type of provider will have different ways of working that could support improvements for all.
4. Share best practice to support other providers and pair up those with strengths to those with weaknesses. Forming a group will allow providers to engage with at least two different partners, providing different information, evidence, and perspectives.
5. Consider how you communicate with employers, especially the person who is the apprenticeship digital account holder. The employer survey will go to this person. If it is a large organisation, their responses may not be reflective of the delivery unless the apprentices' manager and mentors feed into the person submitting the survey responses.
6. Update provider staff on the surveys, what is included in them, how they are administered, how they can impact the responses, what this means for the organisation, and how it relates to the accountability framework. Keep staff up to date with scores. The results will impact the entire organisation.
7. Consider how you can integrate these into your own survey planning and delivery. Allow time at the end your teaching sessions, scheduled periodically, to elicit responses from apprentices to get a balanced response.
8. Understand how the ESFA's scoring is applied and how you can ensure your data is accurate and up to date. ESFA currently uses 18/19 success rate data to determine your ranking, so check this is accurate for your organisation. This will ensure the scoring methodology works and publishes the correct ranking, data and score.

Where can colleagues find more information?

Contacts for this project include:

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Appendix 1 – Survey Results

'My Apprenticeship' Apprentice Survey Results at the start of the project compared to the end of the project, RAG rated to show a statistically significant increase, static or decrease in positive responses:

Apprentice Survey Questions & Positive responses (%)	Partner 1		Partner 2		Partner 3		Partner 4		Partner 5	
	April Scores % - 10 responses	August Scores % 33 Responses	April Scores % 27 responses	August Scores % 44 responses	April Scores % 99 responses	August Scores % 150 responses	April Scores % 52 responses	August Scores % 91 responses	April Scores % 25 responses	August Scores % 40 responses
Communicating clearly with you	30	76	46	49	63	57	48	54	86	85
Ensuring you understand the requirements of your end point	40	77	46	46	70	65	65	71	86	85
Organising well structured training	30	74	57	62	73	66	57	67	89	91
Providing accessible training resources	40	81	71	74	92	88	77	80	75	82
Balancing online learning with classroom based training to suit your needs	40	71	46	54	76	66	67	72	86	91
Taking into account your previous learning	30	71	43	49	72	69	68	76	75	79
Giving you relevant training that helps you perform your job better	60	84	57	64	81	78	62	71	75	79
Providing OtJ training that takes up at least 20% of your total	40	84	74	69	90	89	80	85	89	88
Helping you learn new skills and develop existing ones	40	77	71	69	89	83	77	85	79	82
Supporting you and your apprenticeship	30	77	66	69	78	75	68	75	89	88
Reviewing any issues you have	30	71	66	67	69	69	65	69	89	94
Preparing you for success in your future career	30	74	46	51	86	78	71	76	86	85
Aggregated Scores	36.7	76.4	57.4	60.3	78.3	73.6	67.1	73.4	83.7	85.8
	Key:	< than 2% Higher								
		Within 2%								
		< than 2% lower								

Nb. Partner 3 decided to focus on employer survey results and implement quality improvement actions relevant to that survey, but the employer survey comparison table has not been published due to the ESFA not updating the scoring on Find an Apprenticeship Training Provider during the period of the project.

Appendix 2 – ESFA Scoring Methodology

Information provided from the ESFA under a Freedom of Information request on how scores are worked out. Scores from the survey alone are not used in the publishing of the star rating on Find a Training Provider website:

Both the Employer and Apprentice rating is displayed in Find Apprenticeship Training. The weighting of the employer responses in relation to how this is displayed is below.

1. Calculate the total quality points (employer average + pass rate percentile position)
2. Is distance relevant?
 - a. Yes
 - Location is entered and no training options filters ticked.
 - Location is entered and day release filter ticked.
 - Location is entered and block release filter ticked.
 - Location is entered and day and block release filters ticked.

If distance IS relevant: first, calculate which of their distances to use:

- If they ONLY offer at workplace use zero miles
- If no training options filters ticked OR if day and block release filters are ticked, use their nearest day or block distance.
- If day release filter ticked use their day release distance
- If block release filter ticked use their block release distance

Then Order using the distance ranges logic (Image 2)

- b. No
 - No location entered.
 - Location entered and ONLY at workplace filter ticked.

If distance is NOT relevant - **Order on total quality points logic (Image 1)**

Image 1: Total quality points logic

		If same	If same	If same	If same
1. Take all providers	Order on quality points	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name

Image 2: Distance ranges logic

		if same	If same	If same	If same	if same
1. Take all provider results between 0 - 5 miles away and with 6+ points	Order on quality points	Then order on distance	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name
2. Then take remaining provider results between 5 - 10 miles away and with 6+ points	Order on quality points	Then order on distance	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name
3. Then take remaining provider results 0 - 10 miles away	Order on quality points	Then order on distance	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name
4. Then take all provider results 10 - 15 miles away	Order on quality points	Then order on distance	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name
5. Then take all provider results 15+ miles away	Order on quality points	Then order on distance	Pass rate	Cohort size (high to low)	Number of employer reviews (high to low)	Then order on A-Z name

We use a 'quality score' to order training providers within the search results. The quality score is calculated using the training provider's average employer rating and their pass rate. There are 5 different average employer rating scores; not yet reviewed = 6 points, very poor = -3 points, poor = -1.5 points, good = 7 points, excellent = 8 points. We work out the training provider's pass rate percentile by comparing them to other providers within the search results. The percentile point scores are:

- No pass rate data = 1 point
- 20th percentile = -1 points
- 30th percentile = -1 points
- 40th percentile = 0 points
- 50th percentile = 1 point
- 60th percentile = 2 points
- 70th percentile = 3 points
- 80th percentile = 4 points

We add the points from the average employer rating and pass rate percentile to work out the total quality score.

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