

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: FINAL CASE STUDY

Improving Apprenticeship Learner Support and Accessing Funding

Activate Apprentices

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Improving Apprenticeship Learner Support and Accessing Funding

Project Overview

Data shows that although Training Providers are generally good at providing ALS support for their Learners, there is a lack of confidence from tutors in dealing with ALS issues and a reluctance from Training Providers to claim the ALS funding, partially due to ignorance of the process, but mainly due to not wanting to risk having the funding clawed back during an ESFA Audit. Our project not only looked at upskilling and standardising the ALS support across our provision, but also at introducing new process and procedures that allow us to robustly claim the ALS Funding that we are entitled to and by example show other Training Provider Teams a safe way forwards to supporting their learners as well as claiming the ALS Funding to which they are entitled.

Project Aims

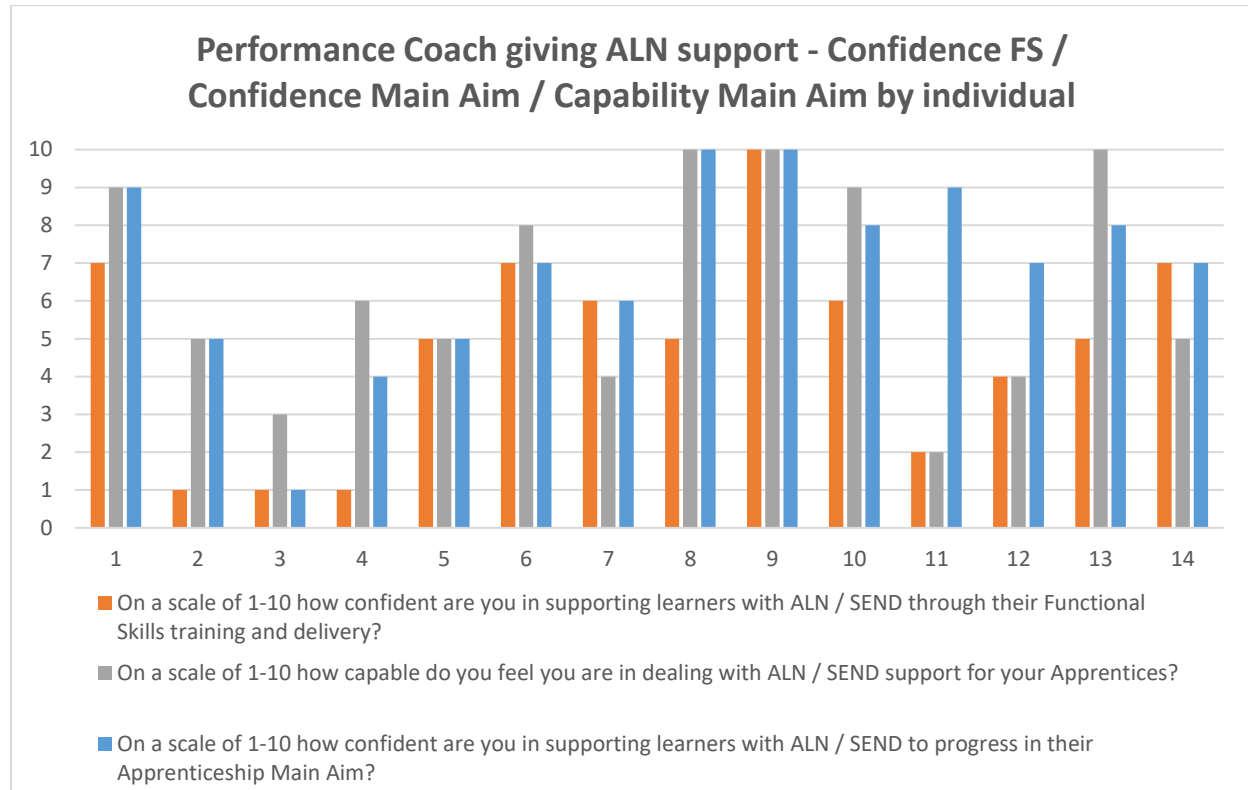
Our project utilised the opportunity of the AWD project in order to review our ALS provision and processes in such a way that we could improve the Learner experience through upskilling our Apprenticeship Team as well as improving confidence and providing extra support for the Team. We have also ensured that we have a robust process and evidence gathering technique in place to enable ALS Funding payments to be safely claimed. All of this was then wrapped in a comprehensive package of CPD training – looking at each aspect separately before bringing them together into a single process to ensure team members are confident and competent in following the process.

Our initial Trial cohort was delayed due to an internal expansion of the project remit to standardise the ALS Support across both Apprenticeships and Study Programs but is now well underway with 3 teams taking part in the trial learning from which will be collated and delivered to the whole team in our January CPD Day rollout. Through this we expect to increase our ALS support provision, increase our completions and retentions, decrease withdrawals, and enable ALS Funding claims.

of up to £300k pa. The increased funding will be used to expand our ALS FS provision with the creation of new posts to provide 121 ALS FS Support to learners.

In addition to producing our internal resources and CPD we have also produced and shared PowerPoint presentations and Process manuals for wider dissemination through the ETF. It is hoped this will then enable other Training Providers to enhance their own ALS provision and access the ALS funding to which they are entitled.

Positive Impact and Expected Outcomes



Initial survey data from responders showed only 14% of our Team claimed any ALS Funding, and this was only for learners with an EHCP. Confidence in delivering support for FS and Main Aim was low at 47% and 67% respectively.

The AWD Project has had a significantly larger impact on the organisation than was originally anticipated, the original understanding was that it would provide standardisation across the 2500 Learner Apprenticeship Provision, improve our ALS support, and enable the claiming of the ALS Funding. What we found was that the project initiated a root and branch review of the ALS provision across the wider company and an extension of the Group Learning Support Team remit to ensure that we have standardisation of approach and process across all the 26000 Activate Learning Students, no matter whether they are an Apprentice, study program college student or completing any other type of Learning.

Instead of being a singular project it has involved colleagues from a variety of areas within the company including our Group Learning Support Team, Finance and Funding colleagues as well as Quality and Compliance colleagues, all of whom have had input into what the process should

look like across the company and how we can ensure we are offering the very best support to all of our learners – bringing the Apprenticeships ALS provision to a much higher level than anticipated. This has taken longer to achieve than anticipated but given the wider impact of the project and the support of senior management then the delayed conclusion to the project is acceptable and worthwhile for the larger gains it will bring to the company.

What has also become apparent is that while on campus students are able to receive direct 121 FS support, this is something that has not been possible within the Apprenticeships cohort, because of this 2 specialist ALS FS tutors are being recruited and will be offering individual 121 support for FS tuition across the Apprenticeships Learners – these roles will be supported by the ALS funding claims to which we are entitled.

Completing the project has reduced the isolation of Team Enterprise and allowed us to forge strong links with other Activate Learning Teams, which has enabled us to use their expertise to improve our own delivery, understanding and ultimately will aid in improving our results as well as expanding the remit of other Teams within the company.


A total of 50 Performance Coaches (Assessors) have been directly involved in ALS CPD and engaged with the ALS Trial, which has resulted in increased direct ALS support for 27 ALN identified learners from the trial cohort of 250 Learners, and to accessing the ALS funding for the work that is being done.

Support Strategies for different types of ALN
ADHD / ADD

- ADHD / ADD - Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder / Attention Deficit Disorder are related conditions where the Learner often appears unable to concentrate, gets easily bored and distracted and can struggle to remember things. It can lead to low self-esteem and confidence.
- It can sometimes be helped with medication or with psychoeducation or behaviour therapy, but it is a lifelong condition

What may help?

- Clear rules and routines - they will need help in planning
- Give an overview first followed by the finer detail - clear concise speech with direct eye contact - provide both oral and written instructions - bitesize chunks
- Help with how to plan and prioritise - may need to teach study skills
- Frequent positive feedback
- SMART targets and Lists - short term goals, break everything down into bitesize pieces
- Help with notes and folders - use a 'stray thoughts' notebook to clear mind?
- Help with planning and layout of coursework, break down and work backwards from submission date
- Pomodoro technique - frequent breaks (can be EAA)
- Assistive Technology - reader and dictate speech to text may help
- Set alarms and reminders, turn off other Apps to reduce distractions




Support Strategies for different types of ALN
Dyslexia

- 'Dyslexia' means difficulty with words; dyslexic people use their brains in a different way to others. It is a lifelong condition and tends to run in families, it can be independent of intelligence.
- Learners with dyslexia may have problems with organisation and prioritizing, remembering complex instructions, problems with reading, writing and proofreading. These can lead to emotional distress, poor self-confidence and frustration.

What may help?

- Regular teaching and study sessions - planned in advance and clear understanding - Diary
- Use Technology to remind - set alerts on phone for meetings and repeating tasks (OTJ)
- Help planning out the time and manner of coursework - provide a clear template
- Assistive Technology - text reader and speech to text dictation + spellchecker
- Coloured overlay or changed background colour to online text
- Additional support with reading - especially when a text asks for them to do something - coursework - take time to explain what it is looking for in detail
- Use specialist GLS FS Tutors to deliver 121 FS training - Lifeskills online class offer may not be suitable due to the anxiety of working in a group with others who are not dyslexic
- Use DVR to perform Q+A / PD instead of written questions



The CPD Training was delivered in a series of presentations to the wider team – to embed a basic understanding of how we can better support out ALN Learners, starting with a CPD Session on the Basics of Support. This was then followed by a further session to explore the Funding rules and Process, and training on the Promonitor System for recording the ALS Learning Plan, ALS Reviews, Support delivery and monthly meetings to meet ESFA Funding Regulations.

This was then built on with individual sessions for the Teams involved in the trial, delivered in a bespoke way for each team – Cycles was done in a f2f Team Meeting, covering all aspects in a single day, other teams elected to cover the CPD in several Teams sessions, whatever works for the individual team is what matters. This was then backed up with a weekly ALS Teams Drop In for those with questions, concerns or needing assistance to take advantage of. Future planned CPD Training will include further training on meeting the ESFA regulations and exemplary evidence recording – once the basic process has been integrated into the team’s working practices.

Staff feedback has indicated they found the training useful and feel more confident with the process and with how to provide support. Confidence and capability have risen from an initial survey rating of 47% (FS) and 67% (Main Aim) to a post training rating of 85% and 95% respectively– and confidence and capability in claiming ALS Funding payments has risen from 14% to 90%.

Quotations from Training attendees

Gaynor Bagnall - *Many thanks for the training regarding ALS support.*

The training was detailed and comprehensive and easy to implement. I have been able to use the resource to support the rest of my team - enabling a consistent approach and this has supported a better understanding of what we can do on an individual level for learners - this in turn can only enhance our delivery of apprenticeships and breakdown barriers.

Andrea Blackmore - I found the ALS support and funding training to be both engaging and enlightening. While there were moments where I encountered slight confusion or missed certain steps, Suzanne's exceptional patience and clear explanations made the overall experience extremely valuable. I now feel much more confident in my understanding of the subject matter, and I believe I can turn to Suzanne for assistance anytime I need it.

Subsequently, I have reviewed my learners and will address their ALS needs as necessary, as well as initiate the funding process where appropriate.

Alistair Mackenzie - Some feedback from the ALS Support and Funding workshop you delivered recently to our team at Oxford:

Very well structured and engaging. There were some good discussion points for the team to be engaged in, as well as you going through the reason, background, and process for the Funding. We all learned some extra tips on how to support specific Learning Difficulties as you had broken down the main difficulties into symptoms and how to support them.

There was some very good "hands on" training as well, that you delivered - with the team actually using the software that will be used to record the ALS support for funding. The systems were a lot less overwhelming once you had guided us through the process using them.

Clifford Pratt - *I found the training to be informative and educative on the subject.*

The fact that I was asked and supported by Suzanne to use the Tutor Guest feature to set up my ALS Learners Group and the Promonitor system for recording the claims further enhanced my understanding of the subject matter.

Overall, very useful in terms of gaining knowledge on how to provide relevant and essential support to my ALS learners.

Within the wider organisation the Project has been well received, stakeholders and senior management are pleased with the outcomes so far.

Quotation from Anne Haig-Smith – Director of Apprenticeships, Activate Apprenticeships

I have been engaged with Suzanne Read as she has worked on the ALS Project for the AWD. As her direct Line Manager, I am fully aware of her work and efforts to help improve our ALS offer across all Apprenticeship Provision and also to ensure that we are able to claim the ALS funding payments in a robust and compliant manner.

The project has grown significantly under Suzanne's direction to include input from our Group Learning Support Team, Finance and Compliance, Onboarding and Completions as well as myself, and has involved a root and branch review of how we support ALN Learners throughout the company. Her work to raise awareness of ALS needs and the process of understanding and supporting our learners alongside being able to correctly record what we are doing is one that will reap rewards for us all - not only financially in terms of appropriately claiming funding for support delivered from ALS payments that will be claimed, but also in terms of increased completions, retention, and decreased withdrawals.

I support Suzanne in the adoption of a longer trial period before rolling out to the wider team and am looking forward to seeing the project fully completed in January when it is rolled out across the Apprenticeship Team.

Quotation from Adam Harries – Performance Manager (Cycles)

I am involved with the pilot of this AWD project for ALS within Activate Learning. I am managing the Cycles Apprenticeships team and am working with Suzanne to roll out the pilot (and subsequent full roll out for our team) of this, in order to support our ALS apprentices further.

It is a great help to have this specific project put in place as it will ensure that we, as a team, have a lot more guidance for how to help our apprentices with ALS/ALN.

We have a large percentage of learners within our apprenticeship provision (around 30 to 40% in any academic year), which range from mild dyslexia to severe dyslexia, dyscalculia, autism, Aspergers, deafness and some areas related to mental health (e.g., severe anxiety issues). We have always gone the extra mile to help these learners, but often without knowing the best way to support them. We also have not had an efficient system in place to record the extra help being given and thus being unable to claim additional funding which would allow us to fully support them (e.g., for extra visits, specialist resources etc), while fulfilling the ESFA Accountability Framework requirements.

Another area which Suzanne is looking to give us more guidance with, from the AWD project, is in offering and applying for ALN/ALS Access Arrangements & Reasonable Adjustments for exams (Functional Skills and End Point Assessments). Again - this is a critical part of the apprenticeship for all our learners, but even more so for those who have ALN/ALS, so it will allow us to help assess and apply the extra support/arrangements that they need. This will ensure that all apprentices are given the same chances to take and pass their exams, thus increasing the level of successful completions, while reducing the number who Withdraw.

Project Outputs

- ALS Resource Manual – in depth exploration of the learner support journey and funding process
- ALS Process Guide – shorter process guide and PROMONITOR use **guide**.
- ALS PowerPoint Presentations – CPD Presentations on supporting ALS Learners, recording the support, and claiming the ALS funding.

Further Activate Learning Resources

Supporting a learner with dyscalculia [File included in the Project pack as an exemplar.](#)

Future Activity

We are planning to introduce further CPD Training to build upon the basic process and raise the evidence recording standard to an exemplary level in the next few months, this combined with 100% audit on ALS evidence recording and ALS Funding Claims will keep up ESFA compliant and ensure any extra funding we are entitled to is claimed robustly and securely.

Once our initial trial is complete, in December 2023, we will be rolling out the ALS Project to all areas of our Apprenticeship provision, a total provision of 2500 Apprentices and a further 75 Performance Coaches (Assessors). This will be launched on our Winter CPD Day, backed up with a number of CPD sessions and an ongoing ALS Drop-In support session once a week.

We are also hoping to develop the ALS Resources further to create an onboarding program to support new staff in becoming competent and confident in ALS Support when they first start with our teams.

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

- ALS Support is key to ensuring you can offer the best Learner Experience to **all** your Learners, especially for those with Additional Learning Needs.
- Ensuring you have robust strategies in place as a starting point for ALS Support and comprehensive CPD training and Staff Development on ALS Support is crucial to ensuring your team can deliver on the Learner's needs.
- Claiming the ALS Funding payments is not as difficult or as risky as is generally believed, a robust process, backed up with good CPD, Mandatory use and 100% audit allows you to ensure there is no risk of ESFA clawback.
- ALS Funding allows you to deliver even more support as it affords the opportunity of reducing caseloads and employing specialist FS 121 tutors to support Learners with ALS needs that are not already catered for.
- We would recommend the ETF AWD Project to anyone who needs to focus on an issue within their delivery, it affords a supported chance to take a fresh look at things and to try new solutions Having an experienced mentor that supports you and provides a sounding board for ideas is also extremely useful, Helen (our mentor) has been **positive** and made great suggestions and given sound advice all through the project.
- Do take the time to spend on the project and if needed to extend your project **to** ensure its delivery is completely right for your organisation, better to be a little late in completion than to rush something through and have to then backtrack.

Where can colleagues find more information?

More information can be found in the ETF Project output documents and by contacting Suzanne Read directly by email – Suzanne.read@activatelearning.ac.uk

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