

# THE PROVIDER INSIDER

INSIGHTS INTO FURTHER EDUCATION

## AN INTERVIEW WITH APPRIS

An interview with Appris – an engineering apprenticeship provider and WYLP member. This interview brings you the response from Appris on how they are supporting working from home for their staff and continuing learning for their apprentices while in the period of isolation.

Interview with Kenny Stoddart, Operations Director – [www.appris.co.uk](http://www.appris.co.uk)

### HOW IS IT GOING?

Yeah okay, working from home this week in different rooms with the family doing likewise. We are in uncharted territory, constantly trying to stay up to speed with government guidance and ensuring we can keep with the internal & external communications flowing. Also, keeping learning going and ensure employers & apprentices are supported. We made an announcement last Tuesday that within the week we will see every apprentice move to remote online learning and provide clear instructions & progress learning, although this was slightly cut short with the PM's announcement last night.

### AS AN ENGINEERING PROVIDER HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH THE MISSING PRACTICAL ELEMENT OF TRAINING?

There is a misperception or understanding of engineering with some new apprentices that it is all practical work - it's not - there is an even blend of both theory and practical. Therefore to respond to the period of isolation we have front loaded theory work - which includes write ups on work they have completed or workbooks and assignment in the hope over the summer, the practical element can kick back in in the workshop and in the workplace - we will continue to monitor this as it will be a planning issue to get all apprentices in on a timetable but we are committed to ensuring this will commence as soon as possible. Tutors are completing theory support sessions remotely & apprentices are required to complete self study & research so there is a mix of lessons and their own study that is making up the delivery. Additionally, Tutors will be completing (virtual) classroom registers, any non-attendance at the sessions will be reported back to their employers. Also, apprentices can keep their 20% OTJ records up to date. We have checked that apprentices can work remotely, and they are encouraged to bring their own devices into centre anyway. Some companies have provided their apprentices with laptops wherever possible but there were a few apprentices that didn't have laptops so Appris have gifted these apprentices with computers from old stockpile so they can work remotely and keep their learning going.

### HOW ARE YOUR APPRENTICES AND EMPLOYERS RESPONDING?

Apprentices have responded very well - they have been informed that although they are working from home, they are still required to complete the "working day" hours and not log off or finish early, if they do, they will be set additional work. Many apprentices are due a pay rise as part of their yearly increase or achievement of Apprenticeship - which is common practice within engineering and linked to their apprenticeship so learning continuing is a commitment to the business and can show they are still entitled to the pay rise. Employers have been extremely good and supportive - no employers have stopped levy funding, and some have issued laptops to learners so they can work from home. Employers have asked Appris to provide work ongoing as they are not going back onto sites - so working together to set the learning plan.



# THE PROVIDER INSIDER

## HOW ARE YOU CONTINUING WITH LEARNING – WHAT APPROACHES / SOFTWARE ETC

Appris use Smart Apprentices – and have developed the system heavily over the past 12 months to support Apprentices and other business functions. All 100% e-portfolio and have been for past 18 months. The system is also used for online tracking of work being completed & reviews also taking place. Zoom webinar platforms is built in, so face to face reviews can be conducted. Smart Room reviews can also video the sessions as professional discussions and mapped to their qualification.

Within engineering there is fine balance between observations and work based learning and being able to sign it off remotely so we still plan to continue the work based element with capturing evidence when back to work commences – however this will be reviewed continually. First EPA's due in September – so this will be reviewed ongoing especially as we approach May / June this may cause concern as remote EPA or observations cannot take place within engineering under current rules.

## ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE CLAWBACK IF THE T&L BEING OFFERED DOESN'T MEET AUDIT?

Key message to staff & learners is to keep evidence & progression going and need to continue to evidence this to support funding being drawn down. Appris run a more academic timetable – so recruitment is September – therefore drawing down funding for start roll on roll off is not an issue for us but may be an issue if still in isolation July / August as that will affect recruitment timescales.

We are conducting interviews with potential apprentices via telephone on online face to face platforms to continue to generate interest in apprenticeships for September starts. Timely achievements for our frameworks may be affected by this so this policy approach needs to be reviewed. Remote learning systems in place so drawing down OPP shouldn't be problem, we have updated tutors delivery plans and the IQA's has oversight of all tutors remote learning so can keep a track of the quality and progress of lessons and tutors delivery.

We will use the deep dive methodology to review the remote teaching & learning as this will use a range of methods to check impact and learning is taking place. We are still maintaining contact & communication with employers remotely as they receive copies of reviews electronically, but we will continue to look at ways to improve employer communication during this period. Keeping communication channels open with employers is key to us knowing when sites are open and when expected to return to work. Some employers have asked Appris to complete a risk assessment to make sure staff are ok to be back at work and what precautions Appris are taking or have taken in response to Covid-19.

## WILL YOU NEED TO USE FURLOUGH FOR STAFF? ANY CHALLENGES / WELL BEING ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE

At this moment in time, we don't foresee using furlough. All members of staff, including support staff are working remotely and are still busy. All staff are included in a group chat and discussion is taking place throughout the day – so everyone is making sure communication & morale is going. Internally reviewing this ongoing to make sure staffing & structures can continue and exploring all options and scenarios. The management team are producing a Covid-19 risk register highlighting the knowns and unknowns – which will be continually updated.

## ARE ANY OF YOUR APPRENTICES AT RISK OF REDUNDANCY – HOW ARE YOU SUPPORTING THEM IF SO?

No issues at the moment – all apprentices are being supported – Appris is working with their employers to ensure they are all ok. At present, employers are supportive of their apprentices but finances over time may affect this so keeping in constant communication, dialogue and while we can, still show evidence of progress and learning so employers continuing with their long term commitment to the programmes and the apprentices. As Engineering apprenticeships are predominately a 4 year programme, employers are mindful of the long term impact and shortage in the industry of engineers but I can understand how this could impact other providers in other sector that have shorter duration apprenticeships.

## ANY TIPS OR ADVICE FOR OTHER TRAINING ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTING DISTANCE LEARNING METHODS?

Explore platforms available – Smart Assessor – Microsoft Teams – Zoom. C&G offering free platform at the moment. Also, if you are a registered charity, search for 'tt-exchange' to access a host of software at reduced costs. Shred-It circulated today information on staff working from home, raising a good point of data protection and disposing of information correctly while in isolation. Work together with other organisations to develop a curriculum that supports e-learning, you never know, this could be the norm in the future for part of the apprentices journey. Try different approaches – get input from learners and employers on their approaches or what they would like to see. The learning plan has to be done in partnership with employers and what skills, knowledge, behaviours they want, so this can be developed into the approach – Great Ofsted evidence too! Making sure there are rules for working from home and what is expected of learners. See you on the other side!

**Interview with Kenny Stoddart, Operations Director – [www.appris.co.uk](http://www.appris.co.uk)**