

# THE PROVIDER INSIDER

INSIGHTS INTO FURTHER EDUCATION

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CALDERDALE COLLEGE

This blog brings you an interview with Calderdale College on their approach to remote working and how this has supported students & staff over the first 2 months of Covid-19 and plans for the future

### AFTER 8 WEEKS OF WORKING REMOTELY HOW HAS IT GONE?

I guess this will be similar to most within the sector. There are good days and then more challenging days. The initial whirlwind of working remotely, juggling family, home-schooling and learning to operate in the very different world was a challenge, but is now starting to become the norm. There was an initial feeling this may only be for a short period of time and the focus was very much on a temporary way of operating. As we progress further into lockdown, we are now focussing on how we adapt for what we expect will become the 'new norm'. There is still a huge amount of uncertainty for the future apprenticeship landscape, but we are certainly trying to focus on our opportunities and are hopeful the market and economy recovers quickly.

### WHAT METHODS OF TEACHING / TRAINING HAVE YOU USED TO KEEP APPRENTICES PROGRESSING?

Virtual learning through a wide range of different approaches has been key to success throughout this period. Apprentices have been engaged using a variety of technologies, such as taking part in Kahoot quizzes to recap knowledge, virtual input sessions, tutor designed YouTube tutorials and case studies to watch and complete via email. Apprentices have also been practising their practical skills in Hair and Barbering using their training heads and also on family members (following government guidance), and completing additional online courses.

Time has also been invested in designing and developing additional resources to support apprentices throughout this period. Training Officers have worked hard to cover every angle to support all individual styles, needs and requirements. The use of an electronic portfolio and virtual learning environments have also enabled apprentice progress to be tracked and monitored by both the Training Officer and employer. As with most apprentices, the amount of support from family/carers/employers and the availability of technology has played a part in the amount and quality of work that has been achieved.

### HOW HAVE YOU KEPT APPRENTICES ENGAGED AND THEIR WELL-BEING GOING?

It has been very different across sector areas and has mainly been dependent on the challenges of the apprentices' job role. Some apprentices who have been able to work from home have enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time on off the job training, whilst other keyworker apprentices have used been utilising the opportunity to practice the skills they have gained and further develop their skills within the workplace.

Regular communication has been important throughout the pandemic, both with apprentices and employers. Having open lines of communication with apprentices throughout lockdown has ensured they are engaged and their well-being is being supported.

Since the beginning of lockdown, Training Officers have been in contact with their apprentices on a weekly basis through both text and telephone conversations. Having a solid relationship with their Training Officer has enabled apprentices to feel comfortable enough to discuss their well-being and to provide support with any issues they may be experiencing.

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## HAVE YOU FOUND REMOTE LEARNING A CHALLENGE OR HAS IT ALLOWED YOU TO LOOK AT YOUR METHODS POSITIVELY?

In the early stages it was a challenge, as it was a very different approach to how we would deliver apprenticeships across some of the skill-based sectors, such as Construction and Hairdressing. There are still challenges that we are working to overcome, such as practical assessments and delivering practical input remotely. It has been a challenging time for apprentices who were ready to undergo their EPA, as they were fully prepared to complete it. We have had to manage the disappointment of it not going ahead, but we are working closely with the End Point Assessment Organisations to progress these forwards where we can.

There are certainly positives that can be taken, including working with new technologies such as Zoom and Teams, which can support us to develop elements our delivery moving forwards.

I think another positive is that we have all become a little bit more tech savvy!

## HOW ARE YOU PREPARING FOR A RETURN TO LEARNING IN THE WORK PLACE FOR YOUR SECTOR?

The return to learning is going to be directed upon government advice and planning is already underway on how this is going to be achieved. There are inevitably going to be initial concerns which will need to be considered by the training provider and the employer, such as the first day at work for the apprentice and managing the initial visit to the workplace once it is safe to do so.

We envisage there being varied demand across our sectors so thorough planning and preparation for return is important. Some hair and beauty employers are preparing for an influx of customers once lockdown for the industry has been lifted, therefore planning to provide extra support to apprentices will be essential, whereas completing assessment may prove to be challenging. On the other hand, some of our Hospitality and Retail based employers are concerned for the future of their business, and do not know whether they will be able to survive.

## HOW ARE YOUR EMPLOYERS PREPARING FOR THEIR APPRENTICES TO RETURN TO WORK?

The majority of employers are working on planning for a return to work. For some employers, this has been positive and has enabled them to reflect on their working practices, such as remote working for teams. For other employers, this has proved to be quite challenging due to government restrictions and the desire to return to work.

Within the Hair and Beauty industry employers have been very busy stripping and cleaning the salons in preparation for their return. They have also ordered a range of PPE for when the lockdown is lifted and it is safe to return to salon. Employers are aware they cannot go back to how it was, and are working on ways in which to support apprentices and their customers.

Other sectors, such as Construction have been able to react quite quickly to getting back to work due to the outdoor working environment, which enables social distancing to be implemented more easily.

## HOW WILL SOCIAL DISTANCING AFFECT YOUR FUTURE DELIVERY?

Social distancing is going to be challenging for the majority of sectors, so training providers are going to have to focus on effective planning. The future delivery of apprenticeships and the structure of our programmes will be determined first and foremost by government advice. As a college we are working to develop remote assessment opportunities and starting to plan for the adaptation of our classrooms, salons and workshops in line with social distancing guidance.

As a training provider we also have a duty to support our employers to ensure our apprentices are safe in the workplace. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked closely with employers to support their needs and requirements, which we will continue to do on an ongoing basis.