

THE PROVIDER INSIDER

INSIGHTS INTO FURTHER EDUCATION

ESFA - KEEPING APPRENTICES ON PROGRAMME ROUNDTABLE – MAY 2021

Last week the ESFA held a roundtable for Apprenticeship Providers across Yorkshire & the North East to discuss the issues with EPA & completions. Much discussion took place & providers shared valuable insights into some of the issues – the key themes identified are in the areas of functional skills, employer commitment and levy employers. This blog breaks down each of those themes in more detail.... Blog by Kelly Townend, WYLP.

Functional Skills

- Functional skills are off putting for many learners and many companies do not see value in them.
- Functional skill remote delivery has resulted in some AO's delaying access testing, also many learners didn't have the necessary tech to support the access i.e windows package, 360 camera etc.
- Learners having private rooms to access when they were at home has been challenging when learners have families also learning & working from home.
- Some learners struggle with English functional skills as it is not their first language and apprenticeships are turned down as employers feel they have adequate English for the role. There was appeal to review what's essential based on the roles & although everyone agreed English and maths are important these could be better embedded or made relevant to the role not a mandated qualification
- Issues with L6 Apprenticeships seeing absolutely no need or benefit for functional skills as they are in managerial roles but as they may not have their evidence they are mandated to complete them which puts some learners and employers off the apprenticeship programme.

Employer Commitment

- Employers not allowing tutors or trainers into workplace which is further delaying completions.
- Employers not writing witness testimonies to support evidence for the EPA and therefore apprentices are unable to complete.
- Employers trying to survive & recover is main priority and comes before EPA – resulting in delays.
- Apprentices who have qualifications in apprenticeship standard value this more than the full programme and leave without completing EPA which employers don't discourage as the EPA isn't held in high regards by employers and learners.

Levy

- Levy being used for middle managers not new recruits, just a way to spend levy money but as such learners are less motivated to complete work and full apprenticeships.
- Levy introduction has impacted success including examples of huge cohort numbers as employers tried to quickly spend levy without the actual commitment to programmes.
- Though the idea was to put employers about being "in driving seat" in reality they don't want the responsibility & management of it and they prefer & value their providers to drive it which can lead to withdrawals.
- The contact providers have to liaise with within a Levy business isn't necessarily the right person within the company for the apprentices overview (typically HR or finance) which can have detrimental impacts on programmes.
- Employers were needed more than ever in Covid yet the willingness to help and support was not there to help with testimonies and observations –rising lack of commitment for some employers was seen and continues to be seen
- SME's are more likely to create opportunities for young people than necessarily levy who will focus on existing staff.

A follow up session with the ESFA on this topic is being held on 16th September
– if you would like to attend please contact us for the access link.