

# APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW

**Project Title – Collaborative Project**

**Organisation Name**

CREATED BY

**Org Logo Here**

DATE 2024



## Functional Skills – Changing the Paradigm

*Please note your project overview should highlight the benefits of your Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) project to others, who are working to improve the quality of their apprenticeship delivery. It should include the impact on others which may include your organisation/s, employer partners, stakeholders, and apprentices.*

### **Project Overview: The problem and why this project is important**

*Briefly describe what your project is all about. Please include why you felt it was important to do an AWD Collaborative Project. What key issues or challenges were you aiming to address that would support quality improvement in your apprenticeship delivery? Tell the reader about the specific objectives and why they mattered. Use simple, relatable terms.*

This project explored how to increase the emphasis of functional skills in ways that were (a) supportive and (b) not off-putting the learners, tutors and employers.

The key challenges we wanted to address were the poor attendance rates and poor completion rates in functional skills English and maths (especially) classes and tests. This was combined with a lack of engagement from some employers and some tutors 'leaving' functional skills to the functional skills tutor.

Our project had three objectives.

1. To investigate what the impact of early engagement with Functional Skill right at the start of the programme of delivery with a clearer link (or road-map) between English and maths and the curriculum. Does giving English and maths the same weighting (or amount of time) when conducting the first skills scan increase engagement?
2. To investigate what different approaches might prove effective for learners in different age groups, postcode regions and workplaces?
3. To investigate what are the perceived and real barriers for learners with functional skills and would a short intensive focus on functional skills prove more effective than a long drawn out one.

## **Project Activities: Making it Happen**

*Walk the reader through the steps taken in your project. What were the key activities? How did the partner organisations work together to deliver the project?*

The project divided quite easily between the partners. Professional Apprenticeships already had been given an Outstanding Ofsted grade in 2023 which included praise for its delivery and approach to functional skills so they were the obvious choice to disseminate good practice, especially around the bootcamp style delivery they use for functional skills.

Kid's Plant Day Nurseries (Ofsted: Good) is the employer as well as the training provider so they took the lead on investigating how employers could be more engaged in the process.

College But Different is a relatively new provider (Ofsted: Good) and they took the lead on how curriculum tutors could better support the delivery of functional skills and be more involved in the assessment of these skills.

Seren Skills Network acted as the co-ordinator between the three other partners and also conducted focus groups with learners and tutors to better understand the barriers and what changes could be made.

Some key resources were developed early on in the project to help give structure and focus. These included:

- a) A bootcamp curriculum framework for functional skills showing how delivery could be condensed into a shorter timeframe towards the front end of the programme. The purpose of this is to ensure that the underpinning English and maths skills are developed at the start rather than being left to the end.
- b) A maths and English Skill Scan which would be carried out by tutors alongside the Skill Scan for the subject curriculum. This would not only give equal weighting to the importance of functional skills with the apprenticeship standard but would also show the learners where the different elements of maths and English would, or could, be found within activities they would carry out within the workplace. A maths workbook was also created as an additional resource to support the Skill Scan.

- c) A flow-chart of how functional skills delivery would look like from a managerial perspective was also developed to aid the planning of delivery.

## Overcoming challenges

*Share challenges faced along the way. What unexpected hurdles arose? How did the team adapt?*

The key challenge was the timing of the project in the academic cycle. Although all partners operate and deliver throughout the year (i.e. no summer closure) inevitable the summer months saw tutors, employers and learners taking annual leave or holidays during the summer months (July and August being especially affected). This had a knock-on effect to how the partners approached the project and the adaptations made were as follows.

1. Early planned foresaw this which is why resources were created early on so that partners were able to work with the learners, employers and tutors as and when they were available during the summer.
2. There was a focus on collecting qualitative evidence from everyone as quantitative evidence was more unreliable (e.g. attendance) due to the summer season.

One plan was to involve learners, employers and tutors in the development of some video resources talking about challenges around functional skills but it proved impossible to find enough participants willing to be filmed. The team adapted to this by the creation of a written report of focus group feedback.

## Project Outputs/Resources

*Please list your project outputs/resources and the purpose of each one, i.e. how they can be used by other providers.*

The outputs and resources are as follows

1. A bootcamp curriculum framework for functional skills showing how delivery can be condensed into a shorter timeframe towards the front end of the programme. The rationale for the order in which the functional skills is sequenced is included plus links to free resources and examples of self-study activities for learners to complete. The maths bootcamp runs for the 10 weeks and the English for 6 weeks. Exemplar lesson plans for the first session of each bootcamp are also provided

2. A maths and English Skill Scan which should be carried out by tutors alongside the Skill Scan for the subject curriculum at the start of the programme and revisited at regular intervals during the programme. This also shows the learners where the different elements of maths and English would, or could, be found within activities they would carry out within the workplace which employers should have an input in creating. It is accompanied by an English and maths Skill Scan guide for tutors and learners to use to help them and give examples of questions to ask and also where easy resources can be found. A maths workbook was produced which could be used by learners prior to doing the Skill Scan, or afterwards as either a bridging activity for those who need to attend functional skills classes or as a revision guide for those who don't. It could also be used by tutors conducting the Skill Scan to reinforce knowledge.
3. A flow-chart for managers of how functional skills delivery would look like as an aid in the planning of delivery.
4. Case studies from all four partners with feedback from learners, employers and tutors.

## **The Results: Impact on Real Lives**

*Tell the story of the project's success. Who was impacted, and how? Include reference to positive impact on your organisation/s, employer partners, stakeholders, and apprentices.*

*Include measurable outcomes (eg quantitative data), testimonials and quotes from people who were positively impacted by the work. Use this as an opportunity to highlight area/s of the project which have gone really well, something that wouldn't have happened without this funding.*

The funding allowed the partners the opportunity to develop resources and test them 'in the field' which wouldn't have been possible without the funding. The project also gave more gravitas to the conversations with learners, employers and tutors as the 'weight' of being involved in a project that will ultimately have national reach was a positive and sometimes exciting idea to participants.

Learners who have started on the bootcamps have positive feedback.

The Skill Scan has proved popular with tutors, employers and learners as 'setting the scene' for functional skills. Tutors have been able to use as a reference point in delivery sessions and also functional skills have been able to use it to help contextualise some of their delivery. Learners have appreciated the joined-up approach in examples being used in different sessions.

## Looking Forward: What's Next?

*How will you sustain any positive impact, or what will you do differently and in the future because of your learning and insights from the project. How will you continue to collaborate as a group following the end of this project?*

The four project partners have an established working relationship as we have collaborated on other projects (including AWD Phase 1) in the past so will continue to work together. We have regular forum meetings throughout the year where we meet (virtually) to share good practice, discuss common objectives and share resources and ideas. We have found that there are many advantages to collaborating in this way rather than trying to 'go solo'.

The outputs of this project are now fully embedded in the partners who deliver as the response from learners, tutors and employers has been overwhelmingly positive.

Some of the recommendations in the forum report go beyond what we have ownership over and we are seeking ways to bring some of our findings to the relevant awarding organisations and have some influence on future developments to break down learner barriers to functional skills.

Delivered by:

