

An Employer's Guide to Work-Based Learning



INTRODUCTION

If you are planning to recruit a new learner or training one of your existing employees, we hope that this Guide will help you understand the services and support which Access Training can provide and the role which you can play in the process.

How can Work-Based Learning help your business?

We know that ensuring your staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to do the job you require is of paramount importance to you. We can help you in these activities through our Work-Based Learning programmes, which will provide you with a number of key benefits:

- cost effective recruitment
- development of a well-trained, well-motivated workforce
- access to funding to help meet the costs of training
- increased productivity through better trained staff
- improved company performance
- demonstrate your commitment to staff development

What is Work-Based Learning?

Work-Based Learning is part of a national programme of Government funded provision to raise skill levels in the country. It aims to develop an individual's knowledge and skills within the workplace environment and presents a real opportunity for people who want to continue their learning outside full-time further and higher education. It provides support for people to work towards the achievement of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Over 100,000 forward thinking employers are currently developing their employees in this way, ranging from small employers who employ less than five staff to household names such as J Sainsbury, Rolls Royce and American Express. Access deliver Work-Based Learning programmes on behalf of over 150 local companies.

What are Apprenticeships?

Where a learner is enrolled on an Apprenticeship or an Advanced Apprenticeship they will be working towards the achievement of an NVQ, Key Skills and, in some cases, Technical Certificates defined for that particular occupation. The Apprenticeship programme, which usually lasts between 1 and 2 years, enables learners to gain occupational skills to NVQ level 2.

Learners following Apprenticeship programmes often progress on to an Advanced Apprenticeship and they work towards achievement of occupational skills at NVQ level 3. Advanced Apprenticeships usually last for 2-3 years. Advanced Apprentices can progress to part time Foundation or other Degrees.

What are National Vocational Qualifications?

National Vocational Qualifications are designed around the skills people use at work and cover all types and levels of work. There are 5 levels within the NVQ system ranging from level 1, covering routine work-based activities, up to level 5 for senior management. Each NVQ is made up of a number of units of competence, which set out what an individual must be able to do in a given area and to what standard. National standards are set by employer-led bodies, who know exactly what skills are needed to do each job well. Each individual unit is assessed and credited and an NVQ is awarded when all of the required units have been achieved. Assessment activities normally take place within the workplace by a qualified Skills Adviser.

What are Key Skills?

As part of their learning programme, learners may also be developing their Key Skills. Key Skills address the personal development of an individual and cover: communication, application of number, information technology, personal skills and problem solving. Key Skills are considered by employers to be an essential part of occupational competence. They are usually delivered alongside the NVQ but are separately certificated.

What are Technical Certificates?

Some Apprenticeships include Technical Certificates. These are formal qualifications, externally tested, which show a thorough understanding and the technical knowledge required in specific occupational areas. They are usually delivered through occasional off the job training, workshops or day release.

Our Skills Advisers will be on hand regularly to help your staff understand what NVQs, Key Skills and Technical Certificates are and to ensure that training is delivered to national standards.

We will work with you to:

- identify suitable employees
- identify existing employees who may benefit from training
- plan and design learning programmes to meet your needs and those of the individual
- provide off the job training to support the learning which is taking place in the workplace
- monitor learner progress and provide help and support where necessary
- assess learner competence in the workplace
- work with the national Awarding Bodies, such as EDI or OCR, to award nationally recognised qualifications to learners, including NVQs, Key Skills and Technical Certificates
- provide ongoing support and training to you and your staff in all aspects of the above

The following sections of the Guide provide further information on the role which we play, and how this supports the role which you can play in the Work-Based Learning process.

RECRUITING AND SELECTING LEARNERS

We can provide a recruitment service which aims to attract and select learners who are best suited to the work and the training you can offer. Having discussed your particular needs we will match your requirements with the skills and experience of our current and prospective learners and shortlist those whom we feel would be most suited to the position you are offering. Alternatively, you may wish to undertake your own recruitment activities. As the employer **the final decision regarding selection will be yours.**

ACCESS' ROLE

- ensure we understand your recruitment requirements
- produce informative promotional material to attract suitable candidates
- link with the Connexions Service, schools and other external organisations to attract as many suitable candidates as possible, including those who may be currently under-represented in your workforce
- use effective and fair selection methods
- advise you on selection methods and help with interviewing if required
- refer suitable candidates to you for interview (forwarding to you CVs where requested)
- brief candidates about the opportunities available within your company
- give applicants feedback on interview results/performance

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- advise us on the types of positions you are seeking to fill and the characteristics which potential learners will require
- interview a number of applicants and keep us informed on the outcomes of these
- take action to consider applicants from under-represented groups
- give applicants accurate information about the work which they will be doing and the training which you will provide
- treat all candidates fairly and consistently during the selection process
- advise us of any existing employees whom you wish to train

INDUCTING LEARNERS (RECRUITS)

Having got the right person you will want to ensure that they stay with you. One way of doing this is by providing a well planned induction programme. Induction training will help learners settle quickly into your company by helping them understand the environment in which they are based and the job which they are doing. We will complement this by providing an induction to tell them about their learning programme.

ACCESS' ROLE

- provide an induction for all learners on starting their training programme
- explain about Work-Based Learning and the role of everyone involved
- provide a general health and safety induction
- advise you on workplace induction and initial training requirements
- explain how NVQs and Apprenticeships are achieved
- explain to learners their rights and responsibilities
- check that learners have understood the information which they have been given at induction
- provide learners with written information to support what they have been given during induction, to which they can refer in the future
- issue you with a Learner Starter Pack which highlights what should be covered during the induction

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- show learners where everything in the workplace is
- introduce them to people they will work with and their supervisor/mentor
- train them in the health and safety of your workplace
- explain your company policies and procedures
- inform learners of their conditions of employment or placement
- provide learners with information about the job they will be doing
- provide the learner with a mentor if possible
- use the Learner Starter Pack (as issued by ourselves) and return the completed documents to Access Training

INDUCTING LEARNERS (CURRENT EMPLOYEES)**ACCESS' ROLE**

- provide an induction for all learners on starting their training programme
- explain about Work-Based Learning and the role of everyone involved
- explain how NVQs and Apprenticeships are achieved
- check that learners have understood the information which they have been given at induction
- provide learners with written information to support what they have been given during induction, to which they can refer in the future

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- provide the learner with a mentor if possible

PLANNING AND DESIGNING WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMMES

To develop the skills and knowledge of the learner, we will jointly plan a learning programme that meets both their needs and your needs as an employer. A Learning Plan will be developed for each learner which shows what training they will receive, both on and off the job, to ensure that they achieve their qualification(s). The Plan will also identify any additional support that they may require. We will obviously take into account their current knowledge, skills and experience when doing this.

ACCESS' ROLE

- work with you to identify the individual's immediate training and development needs
- assess the learner's current skills, knowledge and qualifications
- identify any personal circumstances which may affect learning and training
- establish a Learning Plan with the learner and ensure that you are aware of its content
- regularly review and update the Learning Plan with the learner and yourself making amendments where necessary
- explaining the learning programme including the NVQ and Key Skills requirements

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- help identify the individual's immediate training and development needs
- help us plan the learning programme for the learner
- identify appropriate learning opportunities within the workplace which will help the learner develop and progress
- understand the learner's learning programme including NVQ and Key Skills requirements
- assist us in reviewing, updating and amending the Learning Plan where necessary

DELIVERING WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Having planned the learner's learning programme, we will work with you to deliver the training that is required to develop the learner's skills and help them achieve their target qualification(s). Much of the training will take place within the workplace itself.

We provide off the job training sessions to support what the learner is learning in the workplace or engage external suppliers (eg colleges) to do this. Off the job training should help to develop occupational skills and the learner's knowledge and understanding. We will agree when and where this will take place when developing the learning programme with you. We will try to ensure that the off the job training which is provided is appropriate to the learner's current and future job role.

ACCESS' ROLE

- work with you to plan workplace and off the job learning activities
- be aware of the learning activities that are taking place within the workplace
- provide appropriate off the job training sessions to support the skills that the learner is developing in the workplace, in order that they can achieve their qualification
- keep you informed of what your learner has covered during off the job training activities
- respond to any requests you may have for specific training requirements

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- help learners develop their knowledge and skills.
- allow learners to attend off the job training sessions at agreed times
- help learners put into practice what they have learnt during off the job training sessions
- give learners time in the workplace to compile their NVQ portfolios
- initiate a meeting with us if you have any concerns about any aspect of the training delivery
- let us know if you have any specific training requirements

REVIEWING LEARNER PROGRESS

To check that employers and learners get the most out of the training programme it is important to monitor their progress at regular intervals. This will ensure that any additional training or support needs are properly addressed. We will fully involve employers and agree with you the best time for reviews to take place, so as not to cause disruption to normal workplace activities.

ACCESS' ROLE

- organise a schedule of regular (at least every 12 weeks) review meetings
- involve the learner and employer in the review
- find out and record the progress made by the learner
- identify additional training and support needs and amend the Learning Plan accordingly
- confirm learner's understanding of their responsibilities in relation to Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety
- agree and record actions and targets between next reviews for the learner, employer and Access
- ensure the learner and employer have a record of the review
- advise both the employer and learner of opportunities to progress onto further qualifications, and to support career development

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- let us know how the learner is progressing in the workplace
- advise us of any concerns, which you may have regarding the learner's progress
- attend learner progress reviews
- advise on workplace training and assessment opportunities that may occur in the periods between reviews
- ensure learner's awareness of company Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety policies/procedures
- Follow up any actions agreed at the review meeting
- identify and encourage opportunities for the learner to progress and maximise their potential (both at work and with their qualifications)

ASSESSING LEARNER COMPETENCE

To gain an NVQ, a learner is required to collect evidence to demonstrate that they are competent in a range of different activities. Each learner is allocated a Skills Adviser who will discuss and agree the best way of providing evidence to reach the national standard. The Skills Adviser will observe the learner carrying out tasks within the workplace, to make sure that their work is consistent and that the standard of work required can be reached over and over again. They will also examine pieces of work or information which the learner has collected to demonstrate competence. The role of the Skills Adviser is of key importance and our staff can fulfill this role for you. Alternatively, you may already have your own assessors whom you can use, or we can provide the opportunity to train a member of your own staff as an assessor.

ACCESS' ROLE

- help learners and staff within your organisation understand the assessment process
- help learners understand how to collect evidence and match it to the occupational standards
- formally assess learner competence
- give constructive feedback to learners following assessment
- let you know how your learner is progressing
- work with you to maximise assessment opportunities, eg arranging work activities outside their normal work role so that assessments can be undertaken

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- provide opportunities for the learner to demonstrate their competence in specific tasks
- help learners to collect evidence of the work they have done
- provide us with feedback on learner performance to support assessment decisions
- sign statements confirming the learner's competence in specific activities
- consider training your own staff as assessors

SUPPORTING LEARNERS IN THEIR WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMME

If you have made an investment in recruiting the learner, you will want to ensure that they stay with you and complete their learning programme. Occasionally some learners, particularly those that come straight from school, will change their mind regarding their choice of career and their learning programme after they have joined a company. We will work closely with you to ensure that learners are given proper support and that any potential problems are identified and addressed as early as possible.

ACCESS' ROLE

- keep in regular touch with learners and yourselves
- encourage and motivate learners in their learning programme
- show real interest in the skills which learners are developing in the workplace
- help learners to understand the long-term benefits of training and qualifications
- identify any problems or concerns which learners may have at an early stage
- share any identified concerns with you and agree suitable solutions

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- encourage learners in their learning programme
- help learners to understand the long-term benefits of training and qualifications
- provide opportunities for learners to practice/demonstrate their skills
- give learners time at work to develop their portfolio
- encourage learners to attend and show real interest in their off the job training
- be aware of any problems or difficulties which may be facing learners
- share any concerns with us

ENSURING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LEARNING PROCESS

We operate and promote a policy of equal opportunities throughout the whole of the Work-Based Learning process. This is reflected in our recruitment practices where we welcome applicants from all persons regardless of race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion, sex or sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability. We aim to treat learners fairly and equally during their learning programmes and ensure that they know what to do if they have a complaint. We trust that your commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity will be the same as ours.

ACCESS' ROLE

- promote Equality and Diversity throughout the Work-Based Learning process
- have a written Equality and Diversity policy to which staff, learners and employers understand and are committed
- explain to learners how they should treat other people and how they should expect to be treated by others
- advise you on Equality and Diversity issues and legislation (issuing you with an Equal Opportunities Guide)
- make sure that learners know what to do if they feel they are being unfairly treated in the workplace
- act on any complaints received from learners
- providing training in Equality and Diversity for learners (off the job training)
- check learner's understanding of Equality and Diversity

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- comply with equal opportunities legislation
- demonstrate your commitment to Equality and Diversity in the workplace
- ensure equality of opportunity in selection and recruitment and training activities
- ensure that learners are treated fairly and equally
- ensure that learners are not bullied, harassed or made to feel unwelcome in the workplace
- explain to learners what to do if they have a complaint about the way they are treated
- release staff to attend off the job training in Equality and Diversity

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We have a positive commitment to the promotion of health and safety in the workplace.

ACCESS' ROLE

- using competent staff to verify that you can provide a healthy, safe and supportive learning environment
- assist you on questions of health and safety requirements and application to individual learners
- provide a safe and healthy working environment for learners at all times during off the job training
- monitor health and safety practices on an ongoing basis
- provide health and safety training for learners to raise their awareness of risk
- check learner's understanding of health and safety risk awareness
- investigate any accidents involving learners within the workplace and agree preventative action

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- ensure the health, safety and welfare of learners and bring your policy statement to their attention
- comply with health and safety legislation
- inform the learner about who is responsible for health and safety matters within the company
- provide initial and ongoing health and safety training in the workplace for learners
- provide appropriate protective clothing
- report any accidents concerning learners immediately to us
- assess the risks to which learners are exposed at work and apply the general principles of prevention
- introduce and maintain appropriate measures to eliminate or control risks to the lowest reasonable practicable level
- ensure learners are properly supervised by a competent person
- ensure that learners are covered under public and employer's liability insurance

MAINTAINING STANDARDS

All Work-Based Learning is subject to external inspection by Ofsted (the Government's body for maintaining standards). Inspections look at the quality of learning, support and achievement levels in all occupational areas where training is provided. They also look at the quality of management and leadership provided, focusing on quality assurance and equal opportunities.

We do not wait for external inspections in order to address the quality of our provision. We assess and monitor the quality of our work on an ongoing basis and look for ways to continually improve. Feedback and suggestions from employers and learners are sought and welcomed.

ACCESS' ROLE

- provide you with information regarding the standards of training and support offered by us and required from you
- implement and continually monitor a range of quality procedures related to key activities
- maintain and seek to continually improve the quality of our training and support
- seek the views of employers and learners (through ongoing discussion and regular surveys)
- produce an annual Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan based on national standards for training
- prepare for inspection by the Government's Inspectorate once every 4 years
- work with Inspectors during an inspection

EMPLOYER'S ROLE

- consider how you can maintain the quality of training and support you provide to learners
- provide us with feedback on the quality of our learning programmes
- as required, take part in discussions with Inspectors during an inspection
- as required, allow learners to take part in discussions with Inspectors during an inspection

FURTHER INFORMATION

You may like to visit our website at:

www.accesstraining.org

Access is part of a consortium of training providers offering Work-Based Learning programmes in a range of occupational areas. You may like to visit The Collective website at:

www.gatesheadcollective.co.uk

For more information on Apprenticeships try:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

For more information on Train to Gain try:

www.itsinourhands.org.uk

Thank you for taking your time to read this Guide, which we hope you have found informative. If you have any questions or would like any further information on any aspect please do not hesitate to contact Access at the address shown below:

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