

# English, maths and digital delivery in traineeships and apprenticeships: case studies



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Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work helps people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life. We do this by researching what works, influencing policy and implementing new ways to improve people's experiences of learning and employment. We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

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# INTRODUCTION

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L&W was commissioned by the Department for Education to identify and illustrate effective practice in the delivery of English, maths and digital skills across a range of traineeship and/or apprenticeship providers, and to identify any practices that are particularly effective for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). This report presents six case studies that were developed through this project. These highlight several features of effective practice in the delivery of English, maths and digital skills.

**Embedded delivery:** Embedding English and maths was perceived to be integral to effective practice across all six case studies. English and maths are embedded systematically throughout programmes, rather than treated as add-ons. Providers spoke of the importance of making English and maths relevant by connecting these subjects with the interests, intentions and aspirations of the trainee/apprentice.

**Digital skills:** Case study providers were committed to developing digital skills alongside English and maths, and embedded these in traineeship and apprenticeship curricular in creative ways. Examples included using online portfolio systems for completing and monitoring work and assessments, and covering topics like internet safety.

**Effective Initial Assessment:** Throughout the case studies, English, maths and digital delivery is responsive and flexible to individual needs. Effective initial assessment of proficiency in English, maths and digital is used to develop a personalised, structured and motivating learning plan for each trainee/apprentice. Rigorous tracking of progress means that formal assessments are timely, and progress can be recognised and recorded. Ongoing, regular assessment of learner capability and progress enables this support to remain responsive and flexible throughout a programme.

**Identification of Learning Difficulties and Disabilities:** In-depth and robust initial assessment of all learners is also crucial for identifying those who have a Learning Difficulty and/or Disability that may impact on English and maths teaching, learning and assessments. The initial assessment is the starting point for planning additional resources the learner requires to support them to access Functional Skills qualifications. Ongoing, regular assessment of learner capability and progress enables this support to remain responsive and flexible throughout a programme.

**Learner Voice and Engagement:** The providers featured in these case studies all placed value on seeking the opinions of learners to inform the delivery and future planning of the English, maths and digital elements of their programme. Methods used included: online surveys; learner forums; informal feedback through drop-in sessions; and opportunities for written feedback in work placement booklets.

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# BUSY BEES TRAINING ACADEMY

## Introduction

Busy Bees (BB) Training Academy is a national training provider. They currently provide a range of apprenticeships across the care sector, including Adult Health and Social Care, Childcare, Business Administration and Customer Service. They have delivered apprenticeships for 15 years, employing approximately 1800 apprentices across 350 settings. BB Training Academy were recently rated as an Outstanding provider by Ofsted (2017).

## English and Maths

BB Training Academy believe in “*growing their own talent*”. The most important quality they seek in an apprentice is a passion for their chosen vocation. BB Training Academy do not require a set of minimum English or maths entry requirements when recruiting apprentices. This allows them to offer employment to individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who share the core organisational values. Some learners arrive nervous about the English and maths elements of a programme due to their prior experiences of learning these subjects at school. Delivering Functional Skills qualifications in an inclusive and engaging way is important for increasing the confidence of apprentices whose strong points are not English and maths:

*“I’m a lot more confident now to talk to somebody than I was before I started. I feel like I can go and get my point across. Even if I make a mistake, it doesn’t matter”*  
(Apprentice).

Delivering Functional Skills in a contextualised way, by making it relevant to the apprenticeship framework, is key to the provision at BB Training Academy. Combining vocational content with the English and maths requirements helps learners to understand how these skills are relevant to the workplace and everyday life:

*“If they’ve got to do a maths functional skill, they’ll sometimes say, ‘Oh, I don’t understand how maths ties into my job.’ So, if we say to them, ‘Well, you’re going to be feeding babies; you need to make up formula milk, you’ve got to look at the different measurements you’re going to use, you’re going to look at quantities, you’re going to look at ratio. That’s maths”* (Training Officer and Functional Skills Tutor).

*“It’s a lot easier [learning English, maths and digital skills] at Busy Bees because it does follow through and you do use it with everything. It’s not just that lesson you’re using it in and then you forget about it until the next lesson. It just continues through everyday life”* (Apprentice).

Around one third of the BB Training Academy assessment team previously completed their apprenticeships with BB Training Academy and support the delivery of Functional Skills. Indeed, progression through the organisation is often an aspiration of those learners who enter an apprenticeship. Encouraging learners to realise the value and relevance of English, maths and digital skills for their early and future career is therefore central to the work of BB Training Academy staff. Growing their own talent enables Busy Bees and BB Training Academy to cultivate a cycle of learner buy-in to Functional Skills qualifications:

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*"We've been in your shoes, we know what you're going through, and you can do it,' and it just gives them that reassurance that it's achievable and we know what they're going through" (Head of Sector).*

## Digital Skills

BB Training Academy consider digital skills to be an important aspect of their Functional Skills delivery. In particular, cyber security and internet safety are considered to be essential digital skills for apprentices working with children in the care sector:

*"We find it [digital skills] really important because a lot of young children now are computer savvy, they do use computers in their own homes, so our staff in the settings need to be aware of how to teach the young children how to stay safe online" (Head of Sector).*

Learners are actively encouraged to exercise specific digital skills such as using spreadsheets, email, and word processing. Learners are also encouraged to access distance learning webinars as part of their Functional Skills teaching. Digital skills such as these are delivered as part of the everyday Functional Skills provision at BB Training Academy. This is particularly beneficial for supporting learners to understand and apply their learning to the workplace, and in everyday life:

*"We'll be looking at them devising Excel spreadsheets, maybe looking at posters and leaflets in Publisher and Word, so that we're able to bring every aspect of their Functional Skills into their qualification, so that it doesn't become as if you're doing two or three different things" (Training Officer and Functional Skills Tutor).*

*"It's making sure that the apprentices can see the links to everything and making sure they can see the benefits of using different skills, and they can see how it's helping them in different aspects" (Head of Sector).*

One learner specifically explained how, by using the skills gained from digital skills sessions, they are able to use online resources to better understand essential information for their vocation, namely organisational work policies. This highlights how Functional Skills, delivered in a contextualised way, can be meaningfully applied outside of the Functional Skills classroom:

*"For the framework, I read different policies and sometimes I can't quite understand what it's asking me to do, so I make a note and then go home and research what it was. Then the next day I would then go back and reread that sentence, so that I understand the concept of that word within what they're trying to ask me" (Apprentice).*



### Critical Success Factors

This case study sheds light on the benefits of contextualising English, maths and digital skills within an apprenticeship framework, to support apprentices to realise the value of Functional Skills in the workplace and in everyday life:

- Having less focus on minimum English and maths entry requirements allows the employment of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who share the core organisational values.
- Growing their own talent enables BB Training Academy to cultivate a cycle of learner buy-in to the Functional Skills qualifications.

Video Case Study: [https://youtu.be/Xh xv\\_RJzekU](https://youtu.be/Xh xv_RJzekU)

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# CITY TRAINING SERVICES, BRADFORD COLLEGE GROUP

## Introduction

City Training Services provide work-based learning programmes for the Bradford College Group. The focus of this case study is on their traineeship programme, which commenced in 2015. The main vocational areas offered to trainees are Pharmacy, Business Administration and Childcare. City Training Services are on track to meet their overall target of sixty trainee starts for the 2017/18 academic year.

## English and Maths

When trainees enrol, an initial assessment is completed to ascertain their starting point for English and maths. There is a focus on the distance each learner travels from their initial assessment to the end of the traineeship, and for some trainees this culminates in full Functional Skills qualifications. English and maths sessions are differentiated into Level One and Level Two and delivered one day a week, with the learner attending their work placement for the remainder of the week.

City Training Services have an embedded approach to English and maths delivery. Each trainee is given a Work Placement Pack. This includes questions and prompts designed to encourage them to consider how they are developing and using their English and maths skills during their work-based placement:

*"When learners start their work placement, be it at a school, pharmacy, or elsewhere, we'll go out and review the learners with their supervisor, and we'll be asking them questions of, basically, 'Can you provide examples of how English and Maths have been used.' So, they can correlate their work placement experience with their classroom goals, as well" (Traineeship Manager).*

The learner is expected to answer these questions drawing on particular information and examples from their vocational area. The aim

is to highlight how essential English and maths skills are in the workplace, which trainees do not always realise when they first join:

*"It's only when you ask them these questions that they suddenly realise, 'Do you know, I didn't know I was using that.' The 12- or 24-hour clock, for example, or getting to grips with different types of text, informative and persuasive texts, as well, and seeing how it's used. So, it's only when you make them aware that they start to understand the relevance of it all" (Traineeship Manager).*

Visual aids and prompts are used throughout the Functional Skills teaching rooms to offer examples of how English and maths are used in the workplace, therefore guiding learners to make their own links:

*"I've developed two posters, giving different examples of how English and Maths could be used in the workplace...so if someone's doing a work placement in a pharmacy, and it's like if you a dispensing assistant giving them 5ml of medicine, 'How would you express 5ml as a litre?' It's just making them think of how these different aspects of English and Maths are being used on work placements" (Traineeship Manager).*

City Training Services have opportunities for learner feedback embedded throughout the work pack. This offers trainees an opportunity to say what they are enjoying and to document



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any changes they would benefit from. This also provides ongoing opportunities to alert staff to any additional learning needs. Trainee comments can then be the basis for discussion when the tutor visits the trainee on their placement. The team can therefore get feedback from all learners and respond individually to this.

City Training Services have two plans in place for developing their delivery of traineeships. First, they are implementing a 'roll-on, roll-off' recruitment model, with starts every two weeks. The aim is to ensure greater flexibility for both employers and trainees. Second, they are shifting to a block delivery model, where Functional Skills qualifications are accessed in one week, culminating in an exam. This is in response to feedback from learners that they prefer this approach because they are better able to retain and embed knowledge accessed over consecutive days.

## Digital Skills

City Training Services view digital skills as integral to work-based training:

*"That is something I'm very, very keen on, because I mentioned how, you know, the economy's changing, and different skills are required. It's really good when I can see learners using different digital skills in the classroom" (Traineeship Manager).*

The importance of digital skills in the workplace is emphasised during the first two weeks of the programme through employability sessions. Whilst some digital skills are presented as crucial for any job, the embedding of digital skills is also tailored to specific roles:

*"I think basic proficiency of Microsoft Word, in conjunction with Internet Explorer, and having the ability to, maybe, I'm going to say, cut and paste things, but also having the ability to put that in your own way. I think that's very important. Obviously it differs in different sectors. So, we've got accountancy traineeships, as well, so they'll need to be far more proficient on Excel and other number-based packages" (Traineeship Manager).*



### Critical Success Factors

- Developing a Work Placement Pack that offers regular, structured opportunities for trainees to reflect on how they are developing their English and maths skills through the work placement.
- An emphasis on the importance of an underpinning set of digital skills for all trainees, as well as more nuanced, tailored skills for particular job roles.



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# CT SKILLS

## Introduction

CT Skills is a family-owned Independent Training Provider that has been offering traineeships for 3 years. In 2017-18, CT Skills worked with over 65 trainees, all of whom have achieved at least one qualification, including Functional Skills, Employability, Construction, and Health and Social Care.

## English and Maths

The traineeship programme begins with three weeks of employability skills, such as CV writing and interview practice, with embedded English and maths. ForSkills online diagnostic assessments are used to ascertain Functional Skills levels when learners first arrive, and to plan a course of learning for each individual. This system has an online portfolio where trainees' work and progress can be tracked and courses designed to meet their learning needs. Mock examination grades can be monitored so exams are appropriately-timed. This portfolio follows learners into an apprenticeship, if they progress within CT Skills.

Negative perceptions of, and a lack of confidence with, English and maths is one of the first difficulties staff face. They begin to overcome this by embedding English and maths within the employability skills covered during the first three weeks:

*"Their sticking point is always the maths and their English. They may not have had a good experience at school and coming here and being told that part and parcel of the traineeship is the maths and English section often puts a barrier up"*  
(Traineeship Manager).

Staff aim to develop a learning culture that is different to the one learners have typically encountered in school:

*"80% of the learners that come to us haven't necessarily enjoyed school. The minute you sit them at a desk and say, 'Right, we're going to do maths and English,' that for them is school. So, simple things like not referring to the room as a classroom breaks down another barrier, because they're not seeing it as school. Although we're not a college, a lot of our youngsters refer to it as college, because it's very relaxed"* (Traineeship Manager).

CT Skills holds quarterly learner forums where they seek feedback from learners and amend the course accordingly:

*"So, one of the things they wanted to do was be more creative in the classroom, so we've allowed the tutors to be creative in what they do, and meet the needs of the learners, whilst still getting them through a level one qualification...so, everything is focused around them and what they feel is the most comfortable thing for them"*  
(Traineeship Manager).

*"They teach you the same, just not as much pressure, and then you get comfortable with it a lot better...They're all very supportive, and they'll all listen to you here...English, because I hated English when I was in school. I came here...the way my tutor does it was just so much easier to how I got taught in school. So, it made me a lot more comfortable with it"* (Trainee).

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They organise some of the English and maths teaching around projects to get buy in from learners. For example, they run an enterprise project where learners create a business, whilst accessing embedded English and maths.

This embedded approach is typical across English and maths delivery. Another example is the embedding of maths in the context of the construction industry to align it with the interests and ambitions of a group of learners:

*"Yesterday I was doing a session on measure, shape, and space. One of the things that I told them was, 'That's a massive part of construction. You're going to have to learn how to change centimetres into metres, you're going to have to use your tape measures. You're going to have to learn how to scale-draw, as well, because construction's all about that.' So, I made sure that I could link my maths sessions to what's relevant to their lives, to their employment, their aspirations"*  
(Functional Skills Tutor).

Smaller class sizes are perceived to facilitate an understanding of the vocational aspirations of each learner, which can then be used as a pivot for English and maths delivery.

This year CT Skills have introduced City and Guilds Awards for English and maths. These are for learners who are working towards Level One. It offers them the opportunity to study discrete elements of the English and maths curriculum before moving on to a full Functional Skill qualification when appropriate:

*"You might just deliver measure, shape and size to them, and they just do that one bit throughout the whole programme. It's just breaking it down to bitesize chunks for them, because, unfortunately, not everyone is able to complete a full functional skill. Having bitesize qualifications allows more people to accept the programme because it's realistic"*  
(Traineeship Manager).

CT Skills recognise that the traineeship programme is not long enough for some learners to achieve a full Functional Skills qualification. They offer online support and drop-in sessions to support learners to complete qualifications beyond the six-month time-frame of a traineeship.

## Digital Skills

Staff embed basic digital skills through English and maths delivery. They have sessions about how to stay safe online, they put English and maths resources online, and they are planning to move their employability resources online too. Through the online portal, trainees can access work at home and message tutors if they have questions. There are laptops in each classroom, which are used to facilitate Functional Skills learning. Examples of embedding digital skills include the preparation of PowerPoint presentations as part of speaking and listening activities.

## Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD)

CT Skills has trainees with LDD, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD and Asperger Syndrome. Every learner with additional needs has a designated tutor. They also have staff with specialist training for specific learning difficulties and they link with external organisations to offer support with mental ill health. Being responsive to learners with LDD is an area of practice CT

Skills are currently reviewing and developing and they have recently set up an SEN staff working group:

*"We've recently just set up an SEN working group to see where we can better work with the youngsters who have these needs. Although that's very early days, certain things are already starting to take place, and it's driven based on our learners and what their needs are" (Traineeship Manager).*



### Critical Success Factors

- Learner feedback is systematically sought and fed back into programmes to improve learner engagement with Functional Skills, for example by developing project-based and embedded approaches.
- Bitesize qualifications and ForSkills systems enable CT Skills to Track and celebrate the progress of all learners, not just those who can obtain a full Functional Skills qualification within the timeframe of a traineeship.
- A working group has been set up to develop CT Skills' work with learners with LDD.

Link to video case study: [https://youtu.be/l5Z\\_mvix2sg](https://youtu.be/l5Z_mvix2sg)

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# DEFENCE SCHOOL OF TRANSPORT (DST) & PEARSON TQ

## Introduction

This case study focuses on the apprenticeship programmes Pearson TQ deliver at Defence School of Transport (DST). DST provide driver and transport management training to military personnel. Apprenticeships are an integral component of a career in the Forces. The military currently deliver approximately 43 apprenticeship programmes across a range of trades. DST offer trade related apprenticeships, including Certificate in Driving Goods Vehicles (CDGV) and Telecoms Professionals.

## English and Maths

In the Forces, promotion to certain ranks is linked to achievement of certain levels of Functional Skills in English and maths. Gaining Functional Skills is therefore central to gaining the apprenticeship, and to a learner's future career progression. At DST, Functional Skills are delivered by Pearson TQ, a national education and training provider. Pearson TQ run induction classes for all new Functional Skills learners. These classes provide an early opportunity for learners to realise the importance of gaining English and maths Functional Skills qualifications early in their career to improve opportunities for progression later in life.

*"Functional Skills is an absolute key component of your career in the Army"*  
(Directorate, Educational & Training Services, Army Education).

DST apprentices attend Functional Skills classes during periods of stand down. These are short breaks from trade-based learning. This means that the Functional Skills setting can potentially include a new combination of learners on a daily basis. The classroom is often made up of a range of military learners, completing Functional Skills at levels 1 and 2. The class will also cater for any ESOL learners. Pearson TQ at DST take a responsive and flexible approach in the delivery of Functional Skills to effectively support their learners through qualifications.

A team of support staff work to deliver Functional Skills at Pearson TQ. All staff have a minimum of a Level 5 teaching qualification, and each has individual responsibilities in terms of supporting learners of Functional Skills. Some are also qualified in subject and teaching specialisms including in English and maths, in supporting ESOL learners, and in supporting learners with dyslexia. The presence of staff who are highly skilled in a range of specialisms, promotes a learning environment that is led by individual needs.

Assessing and identifying a learner's Functional Skills needs provides a way for Pearson TQ to effectively respond to the needs of their learners on a given day. Each learner arrives with an initial Functional Skills assessment result from phase one military training. This helps tailor the Individual Learning Record (ILR) that is kept for each student, and which follows them throughout their apprenticeship journey. Assessment of Functional Skills is important not only for identifying current learner needs, but for career development within the Forces.

## Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

Pearson TQ and Defence School of Transport work closely together to deliver the apprenticeship programmes. This effective working relationship has added benefits in terms

of identifying individuals with potential learning support needs. For example, during trade-based training, it might become apparent the learner is exhibiting signs of a specific learning difficulty. In such cases, the military department communicate with Pearson TQ in order to put a support plan in place:

*“(LSN) support is provided by the Company LSN Tutor. A plan of learning is drawn up for the learner and discussed; this support will continue until the learner has completed his/her Apprenticeship or has completed Functional Skills at the level required, usually level 1” (Directorate, Educational & Training Services, Army Education).*

Learner feedback suggests good levels of engagement with English and maths in the classroom setting at Pearson TQ DST. Learners particularly value the small class sizes and that they receive individual attention from the tutors. In addition, they spoke about how they enjoyed learning Functional Skills as part of their career when compared to school-based learning. Learning English and maths in a way that is contextualised to their trade helps them to realise the value of these skills for their career progression.



### Critical Success Factors

This case study highlights a number of good practice examples in the delivery of Functional Skills:

- Highly qualified staff with a range of specialisms can support a learning environment that is responsive to multiple and ranging needs.
- Contextualising English and maths teaching in relation to a trade helps learners to realise the value of Functional Skills for their career.
- Early assessment of Functional Skills levels is important for identifying current learner needs as well as in tracking an individual's learning progress.

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# HULL TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION AT HULL CITY COUNCIL

## Introduction

Hull Training and Adult Education at Hull City Council are a provider of apprenticeships, traineeships and adult education programmes. The focus of this case study is on the traineeship programme. There is a cohort of 20-30 trainees at a given time, who attend for English and maths sessions one day per week across the programme.

## English and Maths

Functional Skills sessions bring together trainees with different knowledge and skills gaps. Each learner has an individualised learning programme, facilitated by smaller class sizes and a high staff to trainee ratio:

*"Much smaller classes. We go into double figures, but no more than that, generally... So, they're already in a smaller environment... we have got the ability to focus on what the individual needs to be doing" (English and maths Manager, Hull Training).*

This flexible classroom environment allows learners to choose to work independently on an area they need to cover for one of their Functional Skills exams. This is perceived as key to maintaining engagement levels because it means trainees can focus on developing the skills and knowledge they need, rather than having to move at the pace of other learners or repeat content they already understand.

Hull Training offered examples of engaging teaching approaches they have adopted. For example, maths problems are delivered in the style of The Numbers Game from the television programme Countdown. This is used to embed basic mathematical principles and functions. In another example, a persuasive writing task was approached through the lens of psychological experiments as a way of using human behaviour and interaction as a hook for literacy.

Functional Skills English and maths classes provide a platform for incorporating vocational skills into the traineeship programme:

*"Generally, the fact that you can make it relevant to them is useful. The flexibility of the qualification - you can make it vocationally relevant, or you can embed it in other areas - is really helpful...we have engineers doing masses of maths. Identifying that, and saying, 'Look, you're already doing these skills. This is the maths you need to be pulling out" (English and maths Manager, Hull Training).*

Effective working relationships between vocational tutors and the Functional Skills team were cited as key to being able to contextualise English and maths:

*"What we've tried to do is do a lot more work on, 'Okay, this is what they're doing in English.' Say it's Construction, those instructors who say, 'We're covering this in English. How does that match what you're doing in Construction at the moment?'; or with the Construction tutor saying, 'We're going to be doing this next. Can you bring that into the English teaching?'" (English and maths Manager, Hull Training).*

In part, this is facilitated by shared office space between vocational delivery staff and Functional Skills delivery staff. This enables ongoing, informal sharing and better relationships between different staff teams.



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## Digital Skills

The use of digital skills is incorporated into the Functional Skills curriculum in an informal way. This is seen as a useful method for developing digital literacy skills, in an increasingly digital environment. Learners are also encouraged to practice digital skills through independent study tasks. For example, learners are asked to research a topical issue using the internet and produce a word-processed article on this. All English and maths rooms are equipped with PCs and learners have frequent opportunities to access online maths resources, to word process written work, and to use the internet as a research tool. Hull Training introduce learners to revision apps they can download to their mobile phones to support them to engage with English and maths tasks outside of the classroom.

## Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

Providing appropriate and relevant support for learners with additional needs is central to English and maths delivery at Hull Training. This support is available for learners who have specific needs such as dyslexia, or those who have behavioural or pastoral issues. Trainees and apprentices with such needs have access to a dedicated learning support worker, who is present in the classroom:

*"In a class, you may have seven or eight learners and a tutor, and you may have three support workers. So, they could actually just be working with a learner each. It's often things like attention issues. They may be assigned a support worker to sit and just keep them on track with what they're doing. You may have someone who's got very severe dyslexia, and someone specifically with them to support them with strategies for how to get through that. We also use them in a more general sense, like if you've got a number of learners who just need that little bit of extra help, one learning support worker could help those individuals together. So, it's based on the need at the time"* (English and maths Manager, Hull Training).

Hull Training actively encourage learners to provide feedback about their programmes. One method of doing so is through online surveys which invite learner feedback and engagement. These are conducted at the beginning, middle and end of a programme. Hull Training also have learner forums, and management staff drop into sessions with targeted areas to question learners on:

*"We have that general backwards-and-forwards information. When they've done the surveys or the forums, we collate what they said. We feed it back to the teams and the tutors, but we also feed back to the learners"* (English and maths Manager, Hull Training).



### Critical Success Factors

- Engaging approaches to teaching are key to the Hull Training traineeship programme. Alongside this, opportunities to focus on developing the skills and knowledge trainees need encouraged better engagement.
- High staff-trainee ratio, and high levels of support staff, create a responsive environment, particularly alongside learner feedback opportunities. It provides a supportive environment for those with additional needs.
- Office space is organised in order to embed sharing and positive working relationships between vocational tutors and Functional Skills staff.



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# NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS & WEA FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

## Introduction

Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals (NUTH) launched their apprenticeship programme in June 2016. They offer apprenticeships in Administration, Healthcare Support, Hospitality, Cleaning and Support Services.

## English and Maths

Functional Skills English and maths are delivered simultaneously to apprentices and other NHS staff as part of Bridges to Learning. This initiative encourages workers in the Health, Social Care and Education sectors to develop in their jobs through participating in learning and training. The overall aim is to help people to achieve professional qualifications throughout their career:

*"People who have come in as a domestic, and then, the next time I see them, they've got their uniform on, because they're a healthcare assistant, and then I have healthcare assistants getting in touch, saying, 'Oh, I'm now doing the assistant practitioner role, and I'm doing a foundation degree'"*  
(Functional Skills Tutor).

The design of the Bridges to Learning Functional Skills provision means that apprentices share the same learning environment as other NHS staff learning English and maths for their professional development. A benefit of this shared learning environment is that apprentices and other Functional Skills learners have the opportunity to recognise that learning Functional Skills occurs at, and can be useful at, various stages of an individual's career.

Central to the Functional Skills provision at NUTH, is the focus on interactive and practical learning. Tutors strive to create an environment that is engaging for learners of English and maths:

*"I try as much as I can to make it relevant to them... we were doing formulae, so, I started off with BMI. I know they've got the sheets on the walls, that one where the patient can look at the sheet and it'll tell you what the BMI is, but I showed them how to work out a patient's BMI from their weight and their height, so they didn't have a chart"*  
(Functional Skills Tutor).

There are a number of factors underpinning the creation of a learning environment that is accessible to learners who experience challenges when it comes to learning English and maths. The practical and interactive delivery style is viewed as particularly valuable for learners of Functional Skills who have lasting barriers around accessing the English and maths curriculum. This often results from classroom experiences earlier in life. Building rapport with learners, whilst raising self-confidence in their ability to learn English and maths is also viewed as an important aspect of delivery:

*"They've been told at school that they're no good at this, they're no good at that, and, you know, their confidence is knocked, and they come to the maths feeling, they're really frightened of numbers, you know? They're really frightened, but, I am able to put them at that ease, and making it fun, and they realise that they're not as poor at maths as they first thought"* (Functional Skills tutor).

## Digital Skills

Learners are encouraged to practice digital skills alongside their English and maths Functional Skills where it is possible. The speaking and listening part of the English Functional Skills qualification is used as an opportunity for discussion around, and raising awareness of, cyber security and internet safety related topics.

*"They're in groups, and I give them options that they can choose to have a discussion. We have to sit and have a debate, so, social media is one of the things that we look at, to debate. The pros and cons of social media"* (NUTH).

Apprentices are provided with opportunities to complete tasks relevant to the qualification in

their own time, as often the resources are not available to do this in the classroom.

*"So, I always say to them, if anybody would like to go and, at home, for their homework, to actually make a leaflet on their computer, or a poster, and bring it in, and talk us through what you've put on the poster. So, I do give them opportunities to do that, but that's at home in their time. I can't do it in the hospital"* (Functional Skills Tutor).

The change in qualification from Key Skills to Functional Skills is viewed as a positive change. It has allowed English and maths to be delivered in a way that is more relevant to the vocation and everyday life by providing tutors with additional flexibility.



### Critical Success Factors

The Functional Skills provision explored at NUTH has highlighted a number of good practice examples:

- Adopting innovative and practical methods for teaching means the classroom is engaging and accessible to learners of all levels.
- Building rapport with learners helps to raise their self-confidence in their ability to learn English and maths.
- A shared learning environment provides opportunity for learners to recognise that learning Functional Skills can be useful at various stages of an individual's career.







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