L&W LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

J.P.Morgan

Blended learning on pre-apprenticeship programmes:
a guide for providers

Introduction

i

Contents

The resource is accompanied by a set of case studies and films which demonstrate effective practice in specific aspects of the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes

Blended learning on pre-apprenticeship programmes: a guide for providers

Pre-apprenticeship programmes aim to help young people aged 16-24 to develop the skills they need to progress to an apprenticeship. Some programmes are explicitly called 'pre-apprenticeships' whilst others have specific brand names. Such programmes typically prepare young people for apprenticeships by providing a combination of vocational training and hands-on experience, however, the components vary by individual programme.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment, and inclusion.

With the support of J.P. Morgan, L&W is undertaking work to share best practice in ways in which organisations can design and deliver inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeships.

Organisations across the world have had to adapt to delivering programmes for young people online. This has been a new experience for the majority of pre-apprenticeship and other work-based learning providers. This resource has been developed to support pre-apprenticeship providers to adapt to a blended learning approach and contains advice and guidance to support providers to learn from wider research and practice in delivering blended learning.

This guide is part of a wider suite of resources, produced by L&W, to enable pre-apprenticeship providers to review and improve the design and delivery of their programmes. The resources are designed to enable providers to gain insight into best practice, apply this to their own programmes and, ultimately, to improve outcomes for young people. The full suite of resources, which include case studies, films, provider guides and 'top tips' can be found on our website.

What is blended learning?

Blended learning

Blended learning is a mode of programme delivery where learners benefit from a combination of teaching in a digital environment and face to face learning. Blended learning can consist of a range of approaches including face-to-face time with learners, online theory-based learning, activities delivered online, e.g. through recorded lessons, flipped learning (learners work on tasks at home before discussions in class), live-streaming, use of textbooks and other physical resources to work at home.

Blended learning is tied to the concept that learning and skills development is a lifelong process - good quality and engaging blended learning can help to develop learner motivation and autonomy, qualities which young people can carry through to the rest of their careers.

What are the benefits?

Blended learning can offer many benefits for providers of pre-apprenticeships and the young people who take part. The benefits of blended learning include enabling young people to learn independently, within their own time frames, and via interface with digital technology. Alongside this they are able to engage directly with staff and other learners, and benefit from the support and interaction that face to face contact can bring. Other benefits can include:

- Young people have more autonomy and ownership of their learning.

- Blended learning can cost less than traditional, full-time learning to deliver.

- Reduced geographical barriers and improved access to programmes

- Resources and lessons can be repeated.

- Improving participants' digital skills.

Adapting to a blended learning programme

Designing a blended learning programme

Taking time to carefully design a high-quality blended learning programme is essential to ensure that you continue to deliver an effective pre-apprenticeship that benefits young people.

This section provides advice on adapting to a blended learning programme, including assessing learner readiness for blended learning, deciding whether and what to deliver online and what to deliver in the traditional learning setting, and selecting resources for online learning.

Key factors to consider in adapting to a blended learning model

Blended learning incorporates the best aspects of online and face-to-face learning. Defining the optimal mix of the two is key to building a successful blended learning environment. Traditional classroom-based methods cannot be copied and applied to the online learning context. You should carefully consider the different components of your programme when making decisions about what aspects could be delivered online and which should be delivered in the traditional setting.

The key components to consider when choosing and developing your delivery model include:

- Preparatory work (employability skills, transversal skills, building learner confidence).
- Delivery of basic skills (digital, literacy and numeracy).
- Work experience placements and employer engagement.
- Individual support (tutor and mentor support).
- Digital inclusion and access.

For each component of your pre-apprenticeship programme, you should consider the following questions:

- What is the most effective way of delivering this component? Why?
- What are the benefits to young people versus the potential challenges?
- What are the benefits to the organisation and staff versus the potential challenges?
- How can this element best support the development of the skills needed for progression to an apprenticeship?

Adapting to a blended learning programme

Gather feedback from young people

One of the best ways of making decisions about a programme is to involve learners in the design process. When designing or adapting a programme, it is key that you have a clear understanding of the needs and experiences of the young people you work with, and then use this information to inform your organisational decision making.

If the young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme have been participating online during the coronavirus pandemic, now is a good time to gather feedback about their experiences, including what has worked well and what has not gone so well. The box below provides example questions that you could ask young people on your pre-apprenticeship programmes.

TOP TIP

Invite young people to share their experiences of online learning via a focus group or through a survey. This will help to inform your decision making about your pre-apprenticeship programme, and how you might adapt to blended learning.

Example questions:

- From your experience, was there anything about the online format that worked particularly well?

- How satisfied were you with the following components of our programme being delivered online?
  (E.g. mentoring, work placement, employer engagement)

- Thinking about your experience as a whole, was their anything about the online format that could be improved?

- Having now completed the programme, what do you think is the best way to deliver this programme?

    - 100% online

    - A mixed approach with both online and face-to-face delivery

    - 100% face to face delivery

Adapting to a blended learning programme

Choosing how to deliver the programme

Organisations across the world have adapted to online learning environments, ranging from using simple messaging services such as WhatsApp (e.g. when learners do not have a computer at home) through to more elaborate IT learning platforms to replace traditional classroom lessons. Moving to blended learning is also an opportunity to explore existing e-learning materials as well as tools for creating them yourself.

There are many ways in which you can deliver content online in addition to traditional classroom and work-based learning.

Gather feedback from young people
Virtual classrooms and webinars

Virtual classrooms are virtual spaces where young people and programme staff meet up live, at the same time using video conferencing software. As in a real classroom, young people follow presentations, ask questions and receive feedback. Webinars are presentations, workshops or seminars using online technology.

Choosing to include a virtual classroom or webinar series in your pre-apprenticeship programme can benefit young people in a range of ways. For example, sessions can be recorded – this means that learners have the flexibility to watch presentations again if they are unsure about something, or to work around other commitments, such as childcare and part-time work.

These options can also create an opportunity for young people who do not normally meet face to face (e.g. if they are on different programmes) to meet. In this respect online sessions may actually support delivery of the programme to young people who may live in areas where they find it difficult to access face to face provision on a daily basis. It can also promote peer support amongst young people who otherwise would not be in contact with each other.

Creating tutorials

You can also record yourself delivering a lesson that can be shared with young people. Recorded lessons create the opportunity to engage young people, without having to get everyone in the same virtual room at the same time. Some options for creating recordings include using video-conferencing tools such as Zoom, or using voiceover and recording functions in multimedia presentation software.

Using resources and setting assignments

You can also send young people resources such as texts, videos and podcasts to provide background knowledge that they can apply in subsequent learning activities like group or one-on-one discussions. For example, young people can be tasked with listening to a podcast about a topical issue, such as climate change, and then engage in a peer discussion representing opposing sides of an argument. This type of activity will allow young people to practice skills such as information management, critical thinking and communication.

Adapting to a blended learning programme

Choosing online tools and resources for blended learning

There are many ways of delivering blended learning using online methods. Providers can use online learning platforms such as Google Classroom to deliver webinars, share recorded PowerPoint presentations, or host an online discussion forum, for example.

One key benefit of online learning platforms is that they can make learning fun and more interactive. You should consider how to use online platforms to communicate with young people, for example using existing smartphone applications, interactive online games and social media platforms to facilitate learning. There is a wealth of technology available to help young people learn, collaborate, discuss, investigate and practice.

The European Commission webpage provides links to a wide range of online learning materials for education and training.

When choosing tools for blended learning, consider:

- Have you got technology in place already that you can use? Will you need to buy new technology and what are the costs?

- Have you considered the resource and time investment needed for your staff to learn to use it?

- Are partners able to use the technology?

- How will you ensure that young people have access to the technology they need and will be able to use it?

- How easy is it to develop and share content?

TOP TIP

Regardless of the online technology you choose, make sure that online learning platforms aimed at young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme are easy to navigate, and use accessible language and instructions. This will be particularly important for young people with low literacy skills.

TOP TIP

The use of videos, clear graphics and images, and interactive games are all effective ways of making learning platforms accessible to young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Adapting to a blended learning programme

Introducing blended learning

Blended learning is likely be a new experience for many stakeholders involved in pre-apprenticeships and so information and guidance about what blended learning is, the benefits and potential challenges and how it's organised should be available for tutors, young people and employers.

You should consider creating an induction package which clearly outlines the blended learning model. You could also consider holding an 'induction' session as part of this, as well as developing a resource pack for staff, tutors and employers to outline the new blended learning approach.

CASE STUDY

Formare, *Latin America*

At the time of writing, Fundação Iochpe and participating Formare units had placed themselves on voluntary lockdown as a result of the global Coronavirus pandemic. As with most organisations, there were urgent concerns about the health and wellbeing of staff and young people, as well as a pressing need to assess how they would continue to support Formare staff and programme participants.

Guides were created in an infographic format for students and volunteer educators which contained a step by step outline of how to participate in online sessions at one company. Other participating employers put additional support in place for young people to monitor their wellbeing and progress, for example by hosting one-to-one virtual meetings in addition to classes, which helped to check how well young people were adapting to online learning.

Participating employers have also been implementing unique ways to keep young people motivated and engaged, for example coordinators asked young people to record videos for volunteer educators about their experiences. They also set tasks for young people to create prototypes of products with materials available to them at home, such as recyclables.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Blended approaches to basic skills (literacy and numeracy)

Online learning can be an effective way to engage young people in developing their basic skills and is likely to play a continued role in the delivery of pre-apprenticeships.

Delivering basic skills online can be an attractive option to young people who have had negative experiences of traditional classroom-based education. Online learning can also help to overcome barriers arising from any embarrassment or stigma associated with basic skills learning.

If you choose to deliver basic skills in a blended way, you should always ensure that you provide clear instructions on how to use the technology effectively. However, this may not be sufficient to overcome barriers for young people with low basic skills.

Young people who have very low levels of basic skills, or who are particularly averse to basic skills learning, will require additional support to engage with literacy and numeracy. When introducing online methods for delivering basic skills, you should consider ways to combine this with face-to-face learning and support. In practice, this could mean providing a face-to-face introductory session where young people can familiarise themselves with digital platforms, and ensuring that young people have a tutor or mentor to contact should they require support.

You should consider novel ways to deliver basic skills to young people via online methods, for example, using existing smartphone applications, interactive online games, and social media platforms to facilitate interactive learning. These tools can work well to engage and motivate young people.
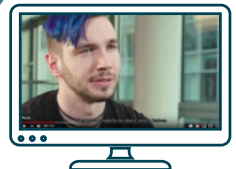
CASE STUDY

Employability, Inclusion and Learning, *Ireland (PEIL)*

One of the aims of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) in Ireland is to invest in education, training and lifelong learning in order to upskill and reskill the workforce. Part of the programme's work was focused on dismantling attitudinal barriers to engaging in basic skills provision by developing an online learning platform with a variety of support options, including a service that allows learners to call, text or go online to access support with their literacy and numeracy from tutors.

CASE STUDY

Joblinge, *Germany*

JOBLINGE, in Germany, have developed a mobile phone app, "Maths as a Mission", to support participants to improve their maths skills 'in a playful manner'. The app is comprised of a comic story and a game, with difficulty levels linked to playable characters. The app is introduced during the orientation phase of the programme and effectiveness is measured with pre- and follow-up tests. Alongside this, the Mathe4Joblinge project aims to improve the digital and maths skills of participants on the pre-apprenticeship programme through the use of e-learning modules (bettermarks) and which are also tested at the start, middle and end of the JOBLINGE programme.
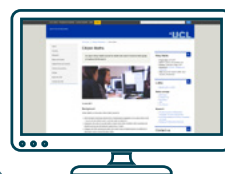
Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Citizen Maths

Funded by Ufl Charitable Trust and developed in partnership with UCL Institute of Education, OCR and with advice from the Google Course Builder team, Citizen Maths was developed as a free open online course for people to improve their maths skills.

The platform was designed using the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) 2015 Mathematics Framework. This framework is grounded in learning maths through real world experience, providing learners with economically and socially valuable skills in maths.

Each course takes between five and ten hours to complete. Each learning point or 'powerful idea' is contextualized and taught through real life scenarios to make it relevant to learners' needs and experiences. Ideas are supported with a mix of short video tutorials (led by experienced maths tutors), practical activities and quizzes.

In 2017, over 12,500 people had registered for Citizen Maths and over 22,00 had completed the pre-course self-assessment that determines their current level.

Benefits of online learning for people with low skills:

Examples from accross the world

Germany's largest e-learning portal for young people with low literacy and numeracy skills highlighted that learners enjoy the flexibility that online learning offers along with the visual content of online courses and the opportunity for instant feedback. The portal, "Ich-willlernen.de" [I-want-to-learn] is run by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) provides free learning materials to increase users literacy and numeracy skills.

You can make basic skills provision more attractive to learners and employers when it is designed and promoted as training that will help young people to get an apprenticeship or job.

For example, young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes typically undertake face to face work experience with employers. As part of their work placement programme you could schedule a weekly online group session whereby young people come together virtually. Facilitated by a tutor, the group should be encouraged to share key learning points from the week, such as how they used literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace, alongside their reflections about what is going well and what they are finding challenging. The tutor should structure discussions to enable the young people to reflect upon the activities they have undertaken and why good literacy and numeracy skills are important. This will help to consolidate their learning and support 'learn to learn' skills development.

Some pre-apprenticeship providers use online learning platforms such as Skills Builder for the delivery of basic skills.

The Skills Builder Universal Framework provides a standard for delivering basic skills. It breaks each skill into steps, supporting progress for learners of all ages and abilities - including those with special educational needs. You could consider using online platforms and other interactive modes of delivery for basic skills.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Blended approaches to transversal skills provision

Pre-apprenticeship programmes typically include activities which focus on developing young people's transversal and employability skills, gradually preparing them to engage with employers through activities such as job fairs or mock interviews, building up to a period of work experience.

Transversal skills are the non-technical skills that are extremely valuable because they can be transferred to almost every industry, they are sometimes referred to as transferable skills or soft skills. Communication, team-working, problem solving, learning, planning and organisation skills are considered important by most employers.

These skills are particularly important for young people on pre-apprenticeships, as it enables them to demonstrate to hiring employers that they have the ability to learn on the job, which is important for successful progression to and completion of an apprenticeship.

You could consider trialling different approaches to supporting young people to develop key transversal skills through taking blended approaches to group-based activities. One benefit of using digital platforms is that they can offer alternative and creative ways for young people to collaborate and learn.

Pre-apprenticeship providers often facilitate cooperative project-based learning (PBL) amongst young people as it's an effective way of developing a range of transversal skills, including social skills, communication and teamwork. Through PBL, young people typically work in small groups on an assigned problem or task. Reflection and feedback are key to this approach, and providers usually build in presentations or feedback sessions as part of the PBL process. For example, young people are encouraged to think about and discuss how they used their communication, teamwork and leadership skills throughout a project.

You could consider assigning group-based challenges to young people to foster learning of key transversal skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem solving, whilst also supporting them to develop key digital skills. The following example highlights how young people can engage in Project Based Learning, using a combination of individual desk-based research and online presentation skills, allowing them to practice both independent study skills and key transversal skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem solving.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Blended project based learning

Example

Young people on a pre-apprenticeship geared to the hospitality sector, are tasked with a group project. They need to work together as a team to design and test a brand-new vegetarian menu for a local restaurant in line with changing consumer trends and environmental change campaigns.

The group meet (virtually or in person) to define the roles and responsibilities of individual team members, e.g. one young person takes on the role of the project manager, another two young people are tasked with undertaking consumer research and another is responsible for creating and designing the menu.

This stage encourages young people to think about their own transversal skills, interests, and strengths, and supports the development of teamwork skills.

Each young person has a set task that they then need to complete. This could be online desk research, setting up virtual interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. a local chef), and using digital media tools to design an aesthetic menu for the local restaurant.

Once young people have completed their task, they work together to design a presentation which they deliver to their tutor and the local restaurant. This is an important stage in the project-based learning method, where young people receive feedback from employers and staff about their performance as a group, including reflections on their transversal skills.

The PBL webpage contains resources and articles about delivering project based learning using online and blended approaches.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Blended approaches to employer engagement

Pre-apprenticeship programmes aim to support young people to develop the skills and competencies that employers require. The most effective programmes can save employers valuable time and money on recruiting and training new employees and reduce staff turnover. This is because employees who have taken part in effective pre-apprenticeship programmes typically arrive with a good understanding of the job, the company and the roles and responsibilities they might undertake.

Online employer engagement can be a successful way of enabling young people to meet with employers in a relaxed environment, particularly for those who may have had limited contact with employers previously.

You should endeavour to include employers in discussions about moving to a blended learning model as it means that you will be able to make sure that programme content continues to meet local labour market needs, enabling young people to develop specific skills and attributes that employers are looking for.

TOP TIP

Many businesses have had to adapt to working from home and may have some creative ideas for employer engagement activities. You should always consult the employers you work with about whether and how to move some of your employer engagement activities online.

TOP TIP

Use a combination of online and face-to-face employer engagement, to achieve a balance of time effectiveness for the employer but keeping the valuable face-to-face interactions that young people benefit from.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Here are some practical ways you can deliver employer engagement activities online.

▪ **Invite employers to speak with young people online:** You could Invite employers to speak with young people on videocall about their industry and recruitment, and the types of qualities they look for in an ideal candidate. Offering employers the option to do this online may be attractive for them as it is less resource intensive, and it may also help to widen your network of employers.

▪ **Host an online apprenticeships fair:** Hosting an online jobs and apprenticeships fair will bring young people and employers together in one place at the same time. Hosting activities like this online may be a convenient option for employers and will provide young people with comprehensive insight to opportunities in their area.

▪ **Organise online employer presentations**: Delivering presentations and other activities online can help young people to develop realistic experiences of working together to deliver an online presentation in the same way that employees have to do when working online. It also allows young people to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to employers who act as judges on the panel.

▪ **Host online mock interviews:** Consider setting up online mock interviews between young people and employers. Young people will have the opportunity to practice etiquette for online interviews and become more confident with being interviewed online.

CASE STUDY

Movement to work, *England*

Movement to Work launched a series of virtual careers fairs allowing employers to signpost their upcoming opportunities directly to young people. The sessions consisted of short employer presentations followed by live, anonymous Q&A sessions via a digital platform. The events provided a great opportunity for young people to broaden their career aspirations and talk to experts from over 40 organisations.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Blended approaches to work placements

Work placements are a central component of pre-apprenticeships. They enable young people to gain first-hand experience of the workplace, improve their employability skills, create a network of contacts at an organisation that they might want to work at and improve their professional skills. Well planned and managed work placements can also help you, as a provider, to build useful relationships for your organisation with local employers that can be built upon in the future.

Decisions about how to take a blended approach to providing work placements will depend on the overall aims of your programme and the profile of employers that you work with. Employers and young people should therefore be at the heart of decision making about whether and how you take a blended approach to delivering work placements.

Taking a blended approach to work placements will not only provide opportunities for young people on your pre-apprenticeship to learn from employers but will also help them develop many other skills. These include developing teamwork, problem solving, communication and writing skills. Importantly, it will develop young people's technology skills in a way they might not experience in a classroom environment.

There are a range of creative ways to take a blended approach to work placements, which would complement, rather than replace, a young person's experience of the workplace.

Consider adding a virtual work placement to young person's overall work experience on your pre-apprenticeship programme. For example, a virtual work placement could be delivered as a component of a longer period of work placement. In practice, this could form the induction process, followed by a period of time in the physical work environment, complemented by specific tasks to be completed at home, online.

A virtual placement could include the following:

- An overview of the organisation and sector.
- Insight into different departments of the organisation.
- Roles and careers in the company – hearing from employees about how they have progressed.
- Shadowing online meetings with internal teams.
- Learning about the recruitment process from HR teams and experiencing an online assessment centre and interview.
- Virtual tours of facilities.

TOP TIP

Involve employers in shaping the content of work placements.
You should work collaboratively with employers to design a blended approach to work placements that will meet the needs of both young people and employers.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

National Health Service, *England*

The National Health Service (NHS) in England designed a work experience programme to give young people a chance to see life inside the NHS. It was aimed at young people aged 15-18. Young people were provided with opportunities to learn about day-to-day life within the NHS, different roles, the values they need to succeed and about ways to get into a career in health care.

10 hours of activity: The virtual work experience programme involves 10 hours of activity which can be completed over a 2-week period. Young people learn how to analyse activities (case studies) so that they can support patients. In addition, young people take part in workshops and complete project work. These activities help them to learn what they'll need to do to excel in an NHS job interview and how they can find their first NHS role.

Live workshops with Q&A: Young people meet NHS professionals in live workshops where they are able to ask them questions. For example, young people get to hear about 14 health professions, meet professional healthcare workers and learn what each role involves.

Work and assignments: Young people complete activities and work assignments to develop an understanding of what a career in the NHS is really like.

Create standalone projects

You could also work with employers to create innovative standalone projects for young people to complete within the workplace. Employers could design a real-life project that young people can work on either at home, or in the classroom. This could work particularly well for digital placements, such as developing social media or website content, or a research-based project.

Effective practice in delivering blended learning

Work with employers to design the activities and help them select the right young people for the opportunity.

You can also consider the types of projects that young people can complete in their homes or within their communities that align with, or enhance, what they are learning on your pre-apprenticeship.

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

Technological University Dublin's Access to Apprenticeship learners stopped attending face-to-face classes in March 2020. Since the closure TU Dublin has transitioned to working with learners remotely and hold regular online informal meetings.

The learners have been completing their course work but have also been sharing with each other how they have been keeping busy, staying occupied and building on their skills during the pandemic. Learners have not only been building on the practical skills they had developed on the programme, but they have also been fundraising and working in frontline services. Discussing the skills that young people have developed through these activities has been positive in boosting their confidence. Learners are continuing to put their practical skills to use at home and have been completing the Construction Industry Federation Online Induction Programme so that they are ready to undertake their work placements when the time comes.

Accenture & movement to work, *England*

Movement to Work and Accenture have developed a programme of work experience for young people during the coronavirus pandemic. Young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) from across the UK took part in the programme (15 in total).

The 5-day programme consisted of part facilitated online sessions (50%) and part independent or team-based activities (50%). The online sessions included coding, design thinking, presentation skills, virtual tours of the Innovation Centre and employability skills, including a CV clinic and mock interview.

Structure and content were key parts of the planning and design process for the activities. In order to ensure that the week was engaging and digestible for the participants, it was split between short facilitated and independent sessions, with a variety of topics covered on each day and throughout the week.

The mornings were comprised of the facilitated sessions, and the afternoons were made up of independent or team tasks, employability one-to-one meetings and mentor group meetings.

Around half of participating young people were fast-tracked to the Assessment Centre for available apprenticeship opportunities.

The programme was delivered primarily using Microsoft Teams as well as other collaboration software such as Mural, Axis and Mentimeter. To ensure digital inclusion, each participant was provided with a laptop, wi-fi dongle and technological support.

Digital inclusion: key factors to consider

Overview

Support from both tutors and peers typically takes place through face to face interaction in classroom-based environments. This means it is important that organisations who are now delivering online need to create ways to support young people through their learning.

Young people who are learning remotely, should still have the same access to dedicated, regular tutor support and peer support. Young people should have a range of ways in which they can contact their tutors including online, through live chat or social media, in addition to phone or text messaging.

Having access to additional support and ensuring that young people are aware of this support, is essential to fostering engagement whilst delivering online learning.

For example, you could consider setting up regular sessions with young people as they adjust to remote learning, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. You could also set up a "buddy" system, whereby young people are matched with a peer who they can approach to have study sessions with, to ask questions, or for general peer support.

Digital inclusion: key factors to consider

Key factors to consider

Whilst blended learning presents an opportunity for everyone to develop their digital skills, the pandemic has highlighted the digital divide and the disadvantage this creates for young people that do not have access to computers and internet. Having access to and being able to afford up-to-date technology may be a key challenge for some young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme.

Young people may not be able to access online material if they are unable to use the internet due to a lack of broadband connection, or if they are unable to afford sufficient mobile phone data. Your organisation should be aware of this and strive to provide options that are less data intensive. For young people who don't have access to technology or are unable to afford a sufficient internet connection, consider approaching local charities or businesses to loan equipment for learners.

If there is a need to move to online learning, you should ensure that, where possible, you are providing resources for young people in a range of offline formats.

For example, printing and posting materials as well as keeping in touch with young people via phone calls and text messaging.

Not all young people will have access to technology at all times of the day, as some may be sharing technology with other members of their family.

Some young people may be averse to engaging with online learning and new technologies due low levels of digital skills, or a lack of confidence.

Ensure that young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are considered in the planning and their access to any online learning is accommodated.

For some young people, physically attending their pre-apprenticeship programme could be one of few opportunities to have space and time away from a difficult home environment. You should consider providing alternative options for these young people. For example, is there an open space in your organisation where young people can choose to attend to complete their online tasks?

Useful links

- The European Commission has compiled a comprehensive list of research, resources and tools in response to the move to online learning during the coronavirus pandemic.

- UNESCO provide online tools and strategies for moving to online learning.

- OECD have published a report on education and training responses to the coronavirus pandemic which includes a list of resources for providers.

Digital inclusion: key factors to consider

Top tips for keeping young people engaged online

A key aim of all pre-apprenticeship programmes is to keep young people engaged, interested and willing to learn. Here are some practical tips to help keep young people engaged on a blended learning programme:

- There needs to be clear links between content that is delivered online and what is delivered in the classroom. Young people learn best when learning is in context, and they can easily understand the relevance of learning to their interests and future aspirations.

- Young people on pre-apprenticeships need to feel confident to raise issues or challenges they are facing; there must be an offer of support for young people. This can be informal, where they can send an instant message (for example having online lunchtime drop-in sessions).

- Some young people may initially be averse to fully engaging with online learning. For example, they may not want to put their camera on, feel shy, not contribute to discussions. You should think of ways to build learner confidence using online video platforms, such as using icebreakers to help young people become familiar with speaking in an online platform, or using different functions, such as "chat", using breakout sessions and polling.

- You should maintain a communication "hub" where you can update information for young people. If your organisation is equipped with an existing learning platform, e.g. Moodle, you could use this to provide information there. If not, consider online tools like Google Classroom.

- Social media could be used as a communication tool, given that many young people are familiar with social networking sites such as Facebook.

- Opportunities to collaborate and interact socially play an important role in young people's learning and in their personal and social development. In classroom-based settings, this would normally be achieved through face-to-face tutor and peer interaction. Facilitating and encouraging communication between young people using online methods will help them to stay connected with their programme and peers.

- Encourage young people to keep in touch outside of "teaching times", for example through peer-to-peer online sessions, or even using video conferencing for refreshment breaks. This will also encourage young people to share their experiences with the rest of the group, which is an important form of support.

- Email young people on a regular basis. Updates should include the week's schedule of assignments, instructions for upcoming work, reminders and tutor contact information and availability. You can also use group text messaging tools to send quick reminders to the class, or a group of young people.