L&W LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

J.P.Morgan

Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships:
A provider guide

Introduction

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This resource has been developed for pre-apprenticeship providers who want to develop and expand their programmes, and for providers who do not currently offer pre-apprenticeships but who plan to do so in the future.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes aim to help young people aged 16-24 to develop the skills needed to access an apprenticeship. Across Europe, 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. L&W have been working in collaboration with J.P. Morgan to share best practice in ways in which organisations can design and deliver inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeship programmes that provide a pathway to apprenticeships for young people, across Europe.

How to use this resource

This interactive resource has been designed so that you can navigate easily through the different stages of programme design and delivery. It can either be used as a step by step guide to programme design and delivery, or you may prefer to select one or two sections of the resource relevant to a particular aspect of your programme. The self-assessment tool located in this resource will help you to identify elements of your programme you might want to consider developing.

This resource is divided into the following sections:
1. Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme
2. Employer engagement
3. Developing strong partnerships
4. Recruitment and initial assessment of young people
5. Delivering your pre-apprenticeship programme
6. Evaluating your programme
7. Self-assessment tool

Each section contains:
- **An overview** of why this element is important in effective pre-apprenticeship programmes and how it contributes to successful programme outcomes
- **Case study examples** from effective pre-apprenticeship programmes across Europe
- **Factors to consider** when you are making decisions about this aspect of your programme
- **Top Tips** based on evidence of best practice
- **A self-assessment tool,** including reflective questions, to help you review where you are now and identify actions to develop or enhance your pre-apprenticeship programme

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

- Read the case studies

- Read the key findings report

- Watch the short films

- Read the Top Tips

Contents

This section provides you with an overview of the different types of partner organisations you can work with in delivering your pre-apprenticeship programme, followed by guidance on how to identify which partners can boost the effectiveness of your programme.

This section provides practical guidance on how to evaluate your pre-apprenticeship programme. Evaluation is about collecting evidence about the value and quality of your pre-apprenticeship programme. It can answer questions such as; what works and why has it worked? What hasn't worked, and why? And what difference has the programme made to young people, employers and the wider community?

This section provides advice on programme design; including developing programme aims and objectives, selecting your target group; establishing a quality assurance framework for your programme and involving employers in programme design. The section ends with an exploration of different funding options and approaches.

This section provides advice on marketing your pre-apprenticeship programme to your chosen target group and provides an overview of different approaches to marketing and outreach that you can use to recruit young people. The section concludes with advice on how to assess young peoples' skills, abilities, needs and aspirations at the start of the programme.

The self-assessment and planning tool uses the RAG system as a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Employer involvement in pre-apprenticeships is essential in ensuring good quality and effective programmes that benefit providers, young people and employers alike. Employer engagement activities should be considered throughout the design and delivery of your pre-apprenticeship programme. This section provides information and guidance about delivering employer engagement activities for pre-apprenticeship programmes.

This section guides you through best practice in programme delivery. It outlines the key components of pre-apprenticeship programmes including preparatory work to build learner confidence; basic skills provision; support such as mentoring and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG); work experience placements, and; the need for flexibility in provision.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Overview:

Taking time to get the design of your pre-apprenticeship programme right, at the outset, is essential in ensuring that you deliver an effective programme that benefits both young people and employers. Involving employers at the design stage is crucial as it means that you will be able to make sure that programme content reflects local labour market needs, enabling young people to develop specific skills and attributes that employers are looking for.

This section provides advice on developing programme aims and objectives, including selecting your target group; establishing a quality assurance framework for your programme; and involving employers in programme design. The section ends with an exploration of different funding options and approaches.

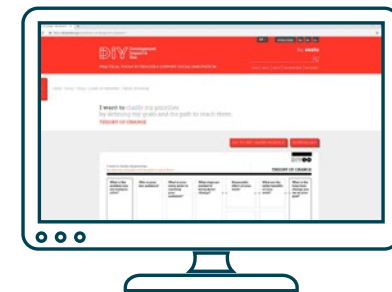# Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Developing programme goals

Clearly defined aims and objectives, for all parties – provider, employers, participants and wider stakeholders - are essential in ensuring that you offer the right types of training and activities for your young people.

Decisions about which young people your programme is aimed at (and what you want them to achieve) is a key factor influencing the aims of the programme and subsequently how the programme is designed.

For example, a pre-apprenticeship programme aimed at reintroducing young people to education and training, before they can progress to an apprenticeship, will require different activities to a programme aimed at providing young people, closer to the labour market, with a refresher in basic skills or a short period of work experience.

The needs of young people should be at the heart of your decision-making. Developing a Theory of Change (TOC) might help you to think about the needs you are trying to address, the changes you are trying to make (your outcomes) and what you plan to do (your activities) to achieve them.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Deciding on your target group

The target groups for most pre-apprenticeships are typically early school leavers, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and young people with low skill levels who face barriers to work and/or can be classed as socially or economically disadvantaged.

Some providers have an open-door policy to young people who meet certain qualifying criteria, for example they are from certain geographical areas and are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Others explicitly target young people with specific additional needs or from specific backgrounds, for example young people who are homeless, former offenders, care leavers or young people dealing with mental health difficulties. Less commonly, some providers limit their programme to young

people who do not have particular support needs and /or who have achieved a certain level of basic skills. These young people tend to be closer to the labour market and require less intensive support than other young people.

CASE STUDY

Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

Tomillo Foundation's Basic Vocational Training programme is targeted at young people aged 14-18 who typically come from very disadvantaged backgrounds, often having left compulsory education without formal qualifications. The two-year programme, which is longer in duration than most pre-apprenticeship programmes, is designed to allow Tomillo to provide the intensive and personalised support that this target group of young people require to build the range of skills they need to enter the labour market and to progress to Tomillo's intermediate apprenticeship.

If your programme is targeting young people with specific needs, or from particular backgrounds, you should consider building a specialist package of support into the design of the programme. Even if your programme is not targeted directly at a particular group of young people, you will still need to ensure you can draw on specialist support; any young people participating in pre-apprenticeship programmes, for example young people who are NEET, will have specific needs. For example, young people often require support to deal with mental health difficulties, or insecure housing.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Responding to the local context

Developing a programme that responds to local employment and skills needs is key to designing a sustainable programme. Local employers will be more likely to see the potential benefits to their business and engage with your provision if it addresses their skills and recruitment needs. And young people will be motivated by the prospect of real apprenticeship and employment opportunities in their local area.

Make sure you keep up-to-date with local labour market information and statistics which can help you identify skills gaps and future employment trends. Developing strong links with agencies that have responsibility for setting local economic priorities and driving economic growth/creating jobs can also be useful in ensuring that you have a good understanding of the local employment context and can adapt your provision to local skills needs.

TOP TIP

Take time to fully understand the needs and opportunities available with local employers and develop a flexible and adaptable programme to meet all stakeholders' needs. This will help to secure a successful outcome for young people and employers.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

TOP TIP

Work with employers in the design of your programme. This will help to ensure that it meets the needs of young people and employers alike and leads to positive outcomes for both.

One way of doing this is to partner with sector specific employers to develop pre-apprenticeship programmes. This can be particularly effective in providing a 'pipeline' of 'apprenticeship ready' young people for current roles in the labour market, leading to increased numbers of young people progressing into apprenticeships.

Involving employers in programme design

Working with employers on the design of your programme will help to ensure that it is tailored to meet the needs of the labour market, enabling young people to develop specific skills that local employers are looking for.

Involving employers from the early stages of your programme also increases the chances that they will be committed to the process, recognise their responsibilities and understand the expectation that they will actively support a young person to progress to an apprenticeship.

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

Jobwise Training focus on providing pre-apprenticeships in business administration, predominantly in the health sector, effectively ensuring that the programme is designed around employers' needs

Bridgewater and Taunton College in the UK worked closely with a large local employer, who was finding it difficult to recruit young people with the right skills and experience for their construction apprenticeships. By working together, the college and employer were able to tailor the pre-apprenticeship to enable young people to develop the specific skills needed. In the most recent cohort of 12 young people, nine progressed into an apprenticeship with the company; the remaining three were supported to find alternative apprenticeship opportunities.

Consider introducing sector specific units, awards or qualifications. This approach is likely to boost the employment prospects of young people who are applying for jobs or apprenticeships in specific sectors where there are skills gaps.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

TOP TIP

Work with specific employers to develop bespoke pre-apprenticeship programmes. This will ensure that young people gain the skills and experience they need to have the best chance of progressing into an apprenticeship.

CASE STUDY

Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

Tomillo Foundation, in Madrid, have developed 'shared training' programmes with large employers in Spain so that each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is supported, both financially and in terms of its specific vocational content, by a relevant company. This is important in making it relevant to the needs of the labour market. For example, their training programmes in the energy, technology and IT sectors have been developed with Fundacion Telefonica, amongst others, to provide training in "Technical Assistant of Microcomputer Systems."

CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

JOBLINGE's Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (S.T.E.M.) project, supported by J.P. Morgan, was introduced in 2017 in response to a shortage of skilled workers in the STEM sector in Germany. Programme content, developed in partnership with STEM experts and employers, is designed to prepare and equip JOBLINGE participants for technical occupations. It provides targeted pre-apprenticeship opportunities in a sector where there are current and long-term opportunities for sustainable and high-quality employment.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Involving other partners in programme design

As well as employers, think about which other organisations it would be useful to involve in the development of your pre-apprenticeship programme. This will vary from programme to programme, but other potential partners might include local government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), trade unions, schools and community organisations, especially youth associations.

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

TU Dublin's pilot programme, Access to Apprenticeship, highlights the key role that different partners can play in the design of an effective programme. An advisory board of key stakeholders in the apprenticeship sector including policy makers, employers, educators and youth workers provides strategic direction on the development of the pilot. It also brings a national perspective to the programme, ensuring implementation is in line with wider developments around apprenticeships.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

The aims of your programme will influence decisions about the length, intensity, and sequencing of activities:

- **The size of the programme**

  Most programmes work with small groups of around 10-15 young people, in order to effectively support individual progression through the programme. If you are working with young people who have high support needs, you might consider having smaller sized groups of young people.

- **How long will it take to complete the programme?**

  Decisions about the length of your programme should be based on the aim of the programme and who the target group are. The average length of shorter programmes is 12 weeks. Longer programmes are on average 6 months and up to 24 months. For example, on the 12-week programme at Technological University Dublin, young people have already gained the required qualifications for an apprenticeship; the pre-apprenticeship programme is an opportunity to make connections with employers with apprenticeship vacancies and for personal development through a focus on soft, or transversal, skills. On the other hand, the longer programme at Tomillo Foundation in Spain is aimed at young people who have left school without the necessary qualifications for an apprenticeship, have greater social and emotional needs, and need re-engagement in learning.

- **How intensive will the programme be?**

  Young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes benefit from gaining insight into the expectations of employers and the responsibilities associated with undertaking an apprenticeship. You should consider how your programme can facilitate this by mirroring the requirements of apprenticeships in your area. Most pre-apprenticeship programmes are designed to operate throughout the working week i.e. Monday to Friday.

- **When will young people join the programme?**

  Some providers align start dates to match employer need, for example Hackney Community College in the UK recruit participants at specific times of the year to coincide with the build stage of employers' construction projects. This means that new entrants onto pre-apprenticeship programmes move quickly into a period of work experience, and that employers benefit from their involvement from the early stages.

  Other providers, offering roll-on, roll-off provision, may recruit every few weeks or in some cases have no set start dates; for example, young people who are eligible can start a pre-apprenticeship with Source Skills Academy in the UK at any time.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Second Chance School (E2C73), *France*

E2C73 follow a clear quality framework as part of the E2C branding process. Each E2C takes part in an independent audit every four years. The audit explores a range of criteria including for example the partnerships established on the programme, the aim of the programme and teaching practices. The E2C label has been officially recognised by the National Council of Employment, Training and Vocational Guidance which regularly reviews French certifications and labels relating to the quality of vocational training.

Quality assurance frameworks

Working to a clear quality assurance framework is essential in enabling you to systematically audit and review the quality and effectiveness of your programme, and to inform continuous improvement to programme design and delivery. Having a quality assurance framework in place will also help to demonstrate to funders, partners, employers and young people that you are committed to high standards of delivery, thereby enhancing programme credibility.

The European Commission Quality Framework for Traineeships sets out a number of key conditions for the delivery of quality pre-apprenticeships including written agreements between providers and participants about objectives, working conditions and financial compensation; effective supervision and monitoring of progression; certification to recognise achievements; inclusive approaches and the involvement of partners, especially youth organisations, in monitoring implementation of the framework.

CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

Each of JOBLINGE's 30 locations is overseen by a local gAC (a local not-for profit stock corporation) which ensures professional implementation of the programme, for example measurable targets, quality standards, defined responsibilities and consistent processes. Each gAC consists of a pro bono supervisory board (decision makers from business, local government and the community) together with a pro bono director and a salaried staff team.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Funding

Having a sustainable funding arrangement is a core aspect of designing, delivering and sustaining your pre-apprenticeship programme.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes can be funded in many different ways, depending on the country context, education and skills policy and priorities, and nature of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system.

In the UK for example, pre-apprenticeship programmes, known as 'traineeships' are government funded. Some provider's pre-apprenticeship programmes are co-financed, for example JOBLINGE in Germany is largely funded by the public sector, in addition to private donations; depending on

the location, public funding is drawn from job centres, employment agencies, local municipalities or federal state funding.

To engage potential funders, you will need to fully understand and be able to clearly evidence the costs and benefits of your programme, including costs per participant.

Different grants and incentives will be available in different countries, regions and localities. Do your research to fully understand what is available. Government websites are usually a good starting point for information.

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme

Evaluating programme design

Robust evaluation of your programme design is crucial to understand for example, which aspects of the design are most effective in delivering outcomes for young people, areas for improvement and where to focus your resources to maximise the benefits to young people, employers and your own organisation. This will support the continuous improvement of your programme design and feed back into the planning and delivery of your activities.

You will be evaluating the effectiveness of your programme design in supporting young people to progress to apprenticeship opportunities. However, there might be some specific aspects of your programme design that you want to focus on. Use the questions below as a starting point to help you think about what it is that you want to find out about your programme design and to begin to develop an evaluation plan.

The **Evaluating your programme** section of this resource provides detailed advice on how to plan and embed evaluation activities throughout your programme and ideas on possible evaluation methods and tools.

Example questions:

- How was the programme delivered in practice?

- How successful was the programme in achieving its stated aims?

- What were the outcomes of the programme;

  - For young people?
  - For employers?
  - Your organisation?

- Which aspects of the programme design were most effective in achieving outcomes? Why? For whom?

- Which aspects of the programme design worked less well? Why was this and how could it be done differently?

- Were any particular issues/challenges experienced in delivering any part of the programme? How could these be overcome?)

- How did employers contribute to the development of the programme?

- What kind of feedback did you receive from different stakeholders about the design of the programme:

  - From employers?
  - From young people?
  - From partners?

- How has this feedback been used to inform improvements to the programme design?

1. Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme
Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
The target group and their needs are clearly defined and informs the design and delivery of the programme.					
The programme is designed to respond to local employment and skills					
You work with employers on the design of your programme to ensure that it is tailored to meet the needs of the labour market					
You have considered working with relevant partners in programme design					
There is a clear rationale for the size, length and intensity of your programme to ensure it meets the needs of the target group					
You work to a clear quality assurance framework to enable you to systematically review the quality and effectiveness of your programme					
A sustainable funding arrangement is in place for designing, delivering and sustaining your pre-apprenticeship programme.					
All aspects of programme design is considered when evaluating your pre-apprenticeship					

Employer engagement

Overview:

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 turnover, because employees who have taken part in effective pre-apprenticeship programmes should arrive with better understanding of the job, the company and the roles and responsibilities they might undertake.

Employers should be a key partner for programme development. This is essential in ensuring good quality and effective programmes that benefit providers, young people and employers alike. Employer engagement activities should be considered throughout the design and delivery of your pre-apprenticeship programme.

This section provides information and guidance about employer engagement throughout a pre-apprenticeship programme, including:

1. Identifying employers
2. Marketing the pre-apprenticeship to employers
3. Involving employers in programme delivery
4. Planning employer engagement activities
5. Maintaining engagement with and supporting employers
6. Evaluating your employer engagement activities

Employer engagement

1. Identifying employers

The first stage in employer engagement is identifying employers. Here are some ideas about how you might engage new employers

Employers already involved in apprenticeship programmes

Your organisation may already be involved in delivering apprenticeship programmes, if so, you could consider involving those employers. The added benefit of this approach is that it can help with the ongoing recruitment of quality apprentices for employers.

Pre-apprenticeships can also create an opportunity for providers to engage with new employers who have not previously recruited young people into apprenticeships. In most countries, pre-apprenticeship programmes are less of a commitment for employers, compared to apprenticeships, both in terms of time (eg length of commitment and staff supervision time) and financial resources (payment of wages, training allowance or expenses). Pre-apprenticeships can therefore be a good way of initially engaging new employers, without asking them to commit to offering a full apprenticeship.

You could approach new employers in one or more of the following ways:

Engaging with intermediary organisations

There are many national and local networks and initiatives which aim to engage employers in the work of schools and colleges. There are also likely to be targeted initiatives in your local area that you could link up with. For example, via your local Chambers of Commerce.

Getting involved in employer forums

These groups can be an effective way of finding employers, hearing their views and involving them in the design of your programme. This can also be an effective strategic approach as it encourages employers to buy-in to activities. This can help them to see the wider picture in terms of the benefits of pre-apprenticeships for both young people and employers.

Building on existing networks.

Some providers take a snowballing approach to recruitment, for example by engaging new employers through existing ones. Existing employers are often effective at promoting pre-apprenticeships to other employers in their networks, particularly if they are able to reflect on the benefits for their businesses and the young people involved.

CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

At JOBLINGE in Germany, the involvement of businesses on the local boards, including high profile companies, helps to open the door to other employers. This was particularly important in the early days of the programme, although today the success of the initiative means that JOBLINGE itself can be the door-opener. Nonetheless, recruitment of new employers is an ongoing process

Employer engagement

CASE STUDY

Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

Tomillo Foundation have developed a positive reputation amongst employers in Madrid. This strong and direct partnership with employers ensures that the pre-apprenticeship programme is tailored to the needs of the labour market. It also means that Tomillo can be responsive to changing labour market trends, by ensuring that young people on the pre-apprenticeship have the full range of vocational and soft skills that employers expect.

Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships

Tomillo Foundation
Madrid, Spain

Things to consider:

When deciding which employers to involve in your pre-apprenticeship programme, consider:

- What industry or sector is relevant to the pre-apprenticeship programme?
- Could you involve employers of different sizes, for example Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well as larger employers?
- Are there employers in the local area, who you have worked with before? Can these employers promote your programme within their supply chains and networks?
- Are there local or national forums, or intermediary organisations, that you can work with?

TOP TIP

Use varied methods to recruit and involve a wide range of employers rather than relying on a few common representatives

TOP TIP

Involve employers in developing and delivering pre-apprenticeships at an early stage. This ensures that employers are committed to the process, understand their responsibilities and the expectation that they will actively support a young person to bridge the gap to employment.

Employer engagement

2. Consulting your employers and marketing your pre-apprenticeship to them

During the early stages of employer engagement, it is beneficial to consult with employers to gain an understanding of their hiring needs, skills gaps, and competencies required for specific occupations. You could do this through one-to-one conversations with individual businesses, or regular meetings with an advisory board. By contacting a group of employers, you can obtain a wider perspective for your programme.

TOP TIP

Gather information from employers using a variety of methods including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and presentations. It can also be useful to offer to meet employers in their own place of work.

It's important to think carefully about the messages you will use to engage employers. Messages should be tailored to your local context, but might include:

- The development of a **talent pipeline** for their business, which employers can influence by shaping the skills which young people develop

- The potential for employers to address their current **skills gaps** by ensuring that new recruits are equipped with these before they apply for an apprenticeship or job

- The opportunity for employers to **test the skills and suitability of young people** for their workplace before offering them an apprenticeship or job, thereby reducing the risk of recruiting an unsuitable candidate.

- Through providing work experience placements.

- Activities can provide **Continuing Professional Development opportunities** for employers' staff, as they often involve engaging with groups and in activities that employees may not carry out in their day-to-day roles. For example, through mentoring

- Employers can often use engagement activities to **promote their own brand, products and services** to young people and the wider local community

- Employer engagement activities are an effective way of employers meeting their **Corporate Social Responsibility targets**

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

Jobwise Training in the UK, recently tailored their pre-apprenticeship programme to meet the requirements of a local hospital, who were planning for an intake of new apprentices. The hospital identified a requirement for apprentices to have a basic understanding of infection control. Jobwise staff were able to draw on their experience of working with employers in the health sector to tailor their pre-apprenticeship programme and incorporate the required focus. This provided the hospital with a supply of potential apprentices, with the skills they require.

Employer engagement

3. Different ways of involving employers in programme delivery

Employers can be involved in the delivery of your pre-apprenticeship programme in a range of different ways. Involvement may be light touch during the early stages, then develop into more intensive activities when the value of your programme has been clearly demonstrated.

Offering work experience is the most common way in which employers are involved in the delivery of pre-apprenticeship programmes

However, employers can contribute in a range of ways, for example, from presenting as guest speakers, to conducting mock interviews or offering shadowing opportunities.

Employers might also contribute by loaning, or even donating technology to support hands-on learning. They can also play a role in assessing project-based assignments and mentoring young people. The following are examples of different ways of involving employers in programme delivery:

TOP TIP

Develop an advisory committee. Engage employers by finding out what they need and recruit them to join an advisory committee for your pre-apprenticeship programme., This will give employers real opportunity to shape the programme to meet their changing needs. Advisory committees can also be made up of wider stakeholders in the programme.

Employer talks

Overview: An employer talk can be an effective way of introducing young people to contact with employers. As such, they can be useful in enabling young people, particularly those who lack confidence in engaging directly with employers, to hear about a particular job role or sector that they might not be familiar with, or about employers' personal stories of how they succeeded at work.

Suggestions for delivery: Talks can be carried out in small or large groups or even on a one-to-one basis. Employers are often invited onto a provider's site to give a talk, but young people can also be taken to a workplace to hear an employer speak. It's also useful to build in time for young people to ask questions.

CASE STUDY

Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

Tomillo Foundation have developed 'shared training' programmes with large organisations in Spain, meaning that each vocational area of the pre-apprenticeship programme is supported by a relevant organisation, both financially and in terms of its specific vocational content. For example, in the energy, technology and IT sectors their training programmes have been developed with Fundación Telefónica and other companies to provide training in "Technical Assistant of Microcomputer Systems".

Employer engagement

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

At TU Dublin, employer engagement activities take place every Wednesday whereby employers give presentations about their organisation, apprenticeships and potential opportunities. TU Dublin also hold regular networking events where young people have the opportunity to meet a range of employers at one time. This provides young people with the chance to meet potential employers to host their work placement and potential apprenticeship, and in turn provides employers with the opportunity to meet potential apprentices.

Networking events

Networking events provide opportunities for young people to speak to employers in a relaxed atmosphere. They are similar to career fairs in that they enable young people to gain a broad understanding of a range of different job roles in a short space of time, but can also allow young people to speak to employers in depth.

Suggestions for delivery: Networking events can be run in a variety of ways. Some providers deliver them during the lunch time period and give young people and employers time to speak over refreshments; others deliver them in a 'speed dating' style, where young people speak to employers on a one-to-one basis for a set amount of time before rotating to the next employer.

Mentoring

Mentoring involves employers supporting young people on an individual or small group basis over a period of time. This enables employers to provide young people with tailored advice and support to develop their skills and career aspirations. It can be a very useful activity for young people who are interested in working in a particular sector or career, but can also be as valuable for those who need more general advice about work and employability skills.

Suggestions for delivery: Mentoring is often delivered on a provider's site, with employers meeting young people in a safe and familiar environment. However, it can also be combined with other activities, such as work experience or mock interviews, which are undertaken in the workplace. It is important that employers and young people have the opportunity to build a relationship, though the duration and frequency of mentoring sessions can vary according to young people and employers' capacity to engage.

Work experience

Overview: Work experience involves young people carrying out a role in a workplace (either with an external employer or in your own organisation) to gain experience and understanding of the world of work. This activity is often seen as the 'pinnacle' of employer engagement and is appropriate for young people who have some employability skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for the workplace, but need experience to develop them further.
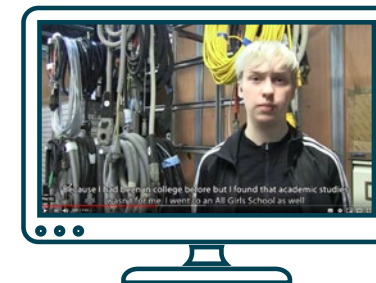
Employer engagement

Mock interviews

Employers can be involved in conducting mock interviews with young people and providing feedback on their performance. This can help young people practice for real interviews and identify ways in which they can improve their interview skills. This activity is most appropriate for young people who have relatively well-developed employability skills and may soon start looking for real apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

Suggestions for delivery: Mock interviews tend to be carried out in two different ways. The first simulates a real interview; an employer sits down with a learner and asks them a series of questions within a set period (often around 15 minutes) and then provides detailed feedback on how they can improve their performance. The second takes a 'speed interview' approach and involves a group of young people and employers. In this approach, young people are interviewed on a one-to-one basis for a short amount of time (e.g. two minutes) before rotating to the next employer. This gives young people experience of being interviewed by different employers and can require them to think quickly and on the spot, much as they would have to in a real interview.

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

Employer engagement activities include inviting local employers to visit E2C73 to give presentations on their organisation and sector, mock interviews for apprenticeship roles, and visits to local companies. E2C73 view employer engagement activities as a core element of the programme, benefiting both employers and young people. Young people benefit from meeting a range of employers, whilst employers have the chance to overcome negative stereotypes they may have of young people at a second chance school. Feedback from employers suggests they value having one clear contact at E2C73 as this enables them to co-ordinate activities efficiently

Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships

Second Chance School (E2C73)
Savoie, France

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

At Jobwise Training, young people design a unique business concept. Each team member takes on a specific role, such as a marketeer, an accountant, team leader; giving them insight to different roles. Together, they present their business concept into a panel of local employers, who in turn ask a series of questions. Through this process, young people gain important work-related skills such as being pro-active, thinking on their feet, interpersonal skills and how to work in a team.

Project/task briefs

This activity involves employers providing young people with 'live' project briefs or genuine commissions for products that their business needs.

Suggestions for delivery: A live project brief can also form the basis of an entire programme of employer engagement for young people, for example, it could be the reason for an employer talk, workshop or masterclass, or provide opportunities for mentoring. For example, young people could be briefed to design a marketing campaign for a new product.

Working on a 'live' project brief or commission from a real employer boosts young people's engagement with activities, as they can see the value of the work they are doing. It can also provide them with a realistic understanding of the workplace, the types of tasks they will need to undertake and the timeframe in which they will have to undertake them.

Employer engagement

4. Planning employer engagement activities for pre-apprenticeship programmes:

When planning your employer engagement activities, it is important to consider the following:

Which young people are you targeting?

Many of the decisions you make about the design of your employer engagement activities will depend on the young people that they are targeted at. Consider:

- What are young people's needs, experience, skills gaps and confidence levels in relation to employment?
- What additional support do young people need in this area?

What do you want to achieve?

It's important to have clear aims and objectives for your employer engagement activities. These should be tailored to the needs and aspirations of the young people you are targeting. Key points to consider when setting your aims and objectives include:

- Your strategic priorities and how employer engagement can support these
- Young people's starting points and what is realistic for them to achieve
- The outcomes you want to achieve for employers and your relationships with them

Length and intensity of activities

Whilst the needs of the individual young people you are working with should be the starting point for designing all employer engagement activities, you also need to consider employers' capacity to engage. In reality, employers have lots of demands on their time.

When deciding on the length and intensity of employer engagement activities, consider:

- How long and how often will young people need to engage in an activity in order to achieve the desired outcome?
- Should intensity and time commitment gradually increase?
- When do employers have availability and capacity to engage?

Location of delivery

The location of activities is also an important consideration when designing employer engagement provision. Factors to consider here include:

- Are young people confident enough to engage with employers in the workplace, or do they initially need to do this in an environment that they are familiar and comfortable with?
- Do employers have the capacity, knowledge and skills to host activities in their workplace? Are there any health and safety issue to consider?
- Will activities have a greater or lesser impact if they are delivered on your site, in the workplace or in another setting (e.g. community- based setting)?

Employer engagement

Who to involve?

To ensure that your employer engagement activities meet the needs of participants, it is important that you involve young people, employers and staff from a range of levels and roles, across your organisation in the development and design of activities.

This might include:

Senior management team: Engaging senior staff in the design of your employer engagement activities will ensure that your operational planning and delivery fits with business planning and wider organisational priorities.

Curriculum/delivery staff: These staff will have an in-depth knowledge of the wider skills that young people are developing on your programme and will be able to advise on how activities can support the achievement of learning outcomes and be linked to internal/external timetables. Many also have direct or recent experience of industry and therefore have a good understanding of employers and the types of activities that will benefit young people.

Having a central team of staff dedicated to employer engagement: Larger providers who deliver effective employer engagement activities tend to have a central team dedicated to coordinating these across their organisation. Smaller providers may consider allocating specific employer engagement responsibilities to particular delivery or planning staff. These staff can act as a key account holder for employers, providing clear lines of communication and involving them in the design and planning of activities. This also supports a coordinated approach to employer engagement, reducing the risk of employer fatigue and increasing the likelihood that employers have a high-quality experience.

Who will deliver the activities?

In addition to employers, a range of staff or stakeholders could be involved in delivering employer engagement activities, including staff dedicated to employer engagement; curriculum/programme delivery staff; careers advice staff; and specialist partner organisations. Things to consider when deciding who to involve in the delivery of your activities include:

- Who has the skills and expertise to deliver the activities?
- Who has the skills and expertise to provide any additional support required by young people?
- Are young people ready to engage with an external employer?
- Will activities have a greater impact on young people if they are delivered by an employer?

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

Jobwise Training have a dedicated Client Accounts Management (CAM) team who run various social media campaigns e.g. through twitter and Facebook. On day one, young people are taken to a local coffee shop with their mentor, usually a staff member working in the CAM team. This team has responsibility for managing relationships with employers as well as providing mentoring support for young people.

Employer engagement

5. Maintaining engagement with employers

Once employers are engaged with your programme, it is important that you consistently reflect on the partnership and have processes in place to support the relationship with the employer. This can be as simple as having regular opportunities for employers to feedback on their involvement at all stages of the programme. Here are some other examples:

One-to-one discussions or visits

Before an employer participates in a specific activity, it is good practice to have a one-to-one discussion with them to identify their specific needs and expectations in relation to the activity. This can help you to tailor activities and ensure that employers gain what they need from the experience. It is also a valuable opportunity to brief employers on young people's needs and levels, so they have realistic expectations and deliver activities at an appropriate level with the necessary support. This two-way information sharing process is important in ensuring that both employers and young people have a positive experience.

Gathering employer feedback on activities

Gathering feedback from employers who engage in your activities is a simple way to identify what works well, what doesn't work so well, and areas for development in future activities. It can also help you to identify any gaps in your employer engagement provision.

Review days

Many providers hold annual review days with the employers they involve in their engagement activities. This provides an opportunity for employers to reflect on what worked well, what could be improved, and to plan how they will run activities during the following year.

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

At Jobwise Training, a weekly review is carried out between young people and their workplace mentor using a standardised form to guide the process. This ensures young people have the opportunity to indicate if and when they need extra support in the workplace, to reflect on their progress so far, and to create short- and long-term goals. Young people can also make suggestions about aspects of the workplace they would like to experience going forward. This review process gives employers the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of work, achievements of young people, and to report any changes in their employability skills since beginning the placement.

Employer engagement

CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

Although contracts exist between JOBLINGE and partner companies, the key to working together successfully is developing a relationship with the employer. The Company Co-ordinator takes time to explain the aims of the pre-apprenticeship programme to potential new employers and maintains close contact throughout the course of an internship, so companies are confident that support is there should any problems arise.

TOP TIP

Establish a single point of contact for employers.

This can be a useful way of ensuring that employers have a clear link with your organisation. It enables them to build a relationship with one person, who handles all the logistics related to their engagement with your programme. It also ensures that they are not bombarded with different requests that they are unable to accommodate.

TOP TIP

Provide wraparound support to employers.

Pre-apprenticeships are more likely to be positive experiences for employers if they feel supported throughout. Regular contact with employers will enable you to answer any questions or concerns they may have, and identify and address any issues as and when they arise.

Support for trainees is also integral to your relationship with employers. If you are available to support trainees with any problems as they arise, then their placement is more likely to be a success. Support is therefore crucial in ensuring that employers continue to engage with your programmes and an increased number of trainees over time.

Employer engagement

Evaluating your employer engagement activities

Robust monitoring and evaluation of your employer engagement activities is crucial. Without this, it will be difficult for you to evidence the difference that your activities make or to know which activities are most effective for which young people and employers.

Support continuous improvement and monitoring of your engagement with employers by collecting and analysing data on participant progress and outcomes and return on investment to employers. Ask employers to provide feedback about the success of programme participants once they are hired. Evaluate programmes to ensure they are relevant to employers and current with changes in the labour market or a particular sector.

TOP TIP

Embed evaluation throughout your employer engagement activities.

This will enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes and impact of your activities, supporting the continuous improvement of your employer engagement.

TOP TIP

Use different evaluation methods to suit your young people, employers and the activities you deliver.

This will make sure you get the information you need for a robust evaluation of your employer engagement provision.

Request feedback at regular points throughout and conduct evaluation at the end of the employer engagement journey. How did we meet your needs? Was the support and training we provided useful? What can we do to make it even better?

The Evaluating your programme section of this resource provides detailed advice on how to plan and embed evaluation activities throughout your programme and ideas on possible evaluation methods and tools.

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
Employers are involved in designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships at an early stage.					
Employer engagement activities are considered throughout the design and delivery of your pre-apprenticeship programme.					
When engaging with new employers, you consider which sector and employer size is best for your programme.					
You engage with new employers in a variety of ways e.g. Chambers of Commerce, by word of mouth, by advertising.					
The messaging you use to engage employers is carefully planned and tailored to your local context.					
You consult with employers to gain an understanding of their hiring needs, skills gaps, and competencies required for specific occupations.					
When engaging with employers, information about their needs is gathered using a variety of methods					
There is a single point of contact for employers to ensure they have a clear link with your organisation.					
Evaluation is embedded throughout your employer engagement activities to enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes of your activities					

Developing strong partnerships

Overview:

Employers are just one stakeholder amongst many, who contribute to successful pre-apprenticeship programmes. Other stakeholders can include schools, young people and their parents, public authorities, public employment services, careers guidance providers, education and training institutions, employers, trade unions and youth organisations.

This section provides you with an overview of the various types of partner organisations and the roles they can fulfil within a pre-apprenticeship programme, followed by advice on how to identify which partners can boost the effectiveness of your pre-apprenticeship programme. This will help to ensure that the resources you devote to partnership development and maintenance are used efficiently and meet the specific support needs of learners.

The following link provides a template which can be used to help identify the partners already involved in your programme and what influence they have on it.

Developing strong partnerships

Providers can work with a range of partners who bring specialist knowledge and resources to programmes, such as:

- **Holistic support to promote successful programme completion.**

  Derby Adult Learning Service, England, has developed a pre-apprenticeship programme in partnership with teams in the local authority who support care leavers and other young people who are NEET. This specialist input ensures that young people on the programme receive holistic support to maximise their chances of success.

- **Specialist support and/or work placements.**

  Tomillo Foundation, Spain, utilise their partnerships with a range of organisations to deliver a specialist support offer for young people at risk of social exclusion. This holistic and individualised support is provided by specialist staff, including psychologists, pedagogical staff, social workers and teachers.

- **Recruitment or referrals to the programme.**

  Surrey County Council, England, works in partnership with Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) supporting vulnerable and excluded adults and young people, and with Jobcentre Plus (local job centre) to secure referrals. They also work with council contractors to secure work placements and progression opportunities.

- **Delivering specific programme elements.**

  The pre-apprenticeship offered by Barclays, in England, is delivered with Capita Talent Partnership who are responsible for the recruitment and training of young people and providing them with information and guidance.

- **Offering oversight or advice.**

  The Youth Activation Agency, Gijon, Spain has an extensive steering committee including local and regional stakeholders and representatives of government, employers and young people. Bringing these stakeholders together was a key objective of the project as it allowed each partner to contribute their knowledge and expertise at all stages of the programme.

Developing strong partnerships

Mapping your existing partnerships

The points set out below can help you to identify which partners you currently work with, as well as any gaps in support, which you may need to identify new partners to fill. You might want to consider visually 'mapping' your current partnerships on to a diagram to help with this.

Current partnerships

- Who do you work with (locally and nationally) to deliver the programme?
- What is the role of each of these partners? How do they benefit the programme?
- Are there gaps in your programme which could be filled by partnering with an external organisation?
- What are the barriers to developing effective partnerships in your local area?
- Think of ways in which your organisation has ever overcome challenges in developing partnerships?

Determining the need for a partnership

In order to determine which partners you could potentially bring on to the programme, you must first establish a clear idea of what your pre-apprenticeship aims to deliver as well as young people's needs.

- Are there gaps in the pre-apprenticeship, such as activity or content that would benefit young people's progression through the programme?
- Could the numbers of referrals to the programme be higher; perhaps from a specific type of organisation?
- Would young people benefit from information, guidance or support from an external organisation?

Things to consider when thinking about new partnerships:

- **Experience** – it can be useful, but not essential, to have a partner with previous experience involved in supporting pre-apprenticeships, as they are likely to need less support and know which approaches work with young people on such programmes
- **Interest and commitment** – it's important to ensure that your partners have a genuine interest and commitment to supporting young people (many of whom will be from disadvantaged backgrounds) to progress towards an apprenticeship. It's not always easy to provide the level of support required. Lack of interest and commitment is likely to mean that your programme and young people will not receive the attention or professional input required.
- **Resources** – your partner will need to have the resources required to fill your gap in provision. Your focus should be on available resources, since though an organisation may have the resources required, these resources may already be being used and therefore may not be allocated to supporting your programme. You should also consider their financial position as well as the impact of possible future events – a partner who becomes insolvent part-way through your pre-apprenticeship can have substantial negative repercussions for your programme and all those involved
- **Location** – if your partner is to provide learners with a physically-accessed service, then they need to be close enough to your learners' homes to be reasonably accessible.

Developing strong partnerships

Choosing the right partners

Education and Training providers

Education providers can be used to provide the staff and facilities required to deliver all or part of the training for your programme as well as the expertise necessary to effectively inform the structure and content of your programme. You can also benefit from tapping into providers' networks of employers, community organisations and government contacts, as well as their knowledge of effective recruitment and retainment practices.

Community organisations and intermediaries

Community organisations encompass a wide variety of organisations. They can include:

- Recruitment companies and jobsites which can act as platforms to recruit young people onto your programme and match them to employers upon completion of their programme
- Specialist organisations that provide support to young people from particular backgrounds, or with specific needs. For example, services for young people who have been in care, or young people who have previously been involved in crime
- Local charities which can, for example, provide financial support for pre-apprentices to travel and buy work clothes, tools and equipment

- Financial organisations which can provide funding for your programme, as well as delivery of specialist support, such as money management activities
- Healthcare organisations which can support learners with mental or physical health conditions to overcome health-related barriers to learning and work. In an era of increasing recognition and prevalence of mental health difficulties, these types of partners are likely more relevant now than ever

Employment support organisations, such as local job centres, which can provide access to a network of potential partners, as well as job searching, matching and brokerage services

Government organisations

Government organisations and departments are wide ranging and can include a local benefits office or job centre, a regional educational authority or national department. They can play a range of roles in supporting your pre-apprenticeship programme, from offering funding support or work experience to young people, to making referrals to your programme, providing specialist support, or apprenticeship vacancies when young people are ready to progress. They can also add a degree of legitimacy and credibility to your programme, which is useful when you are marketing it to prospective learners and partners. In addition, national and local government organisations can often offer access to a wide range of other potential partners, and they can share expertise in accessing different funding streams.

Developing strong partnerships

Trade Unions

Unions are among the less obvious but still useful partners you may consider working with. They can set the standard for the skills and behaviours required to work in a particular sector; because of this their advice can be invaluable to the shaping of your programme. Unions also have extensive networks of sector-specific employers and education providers which you may be able to access to recruit more partners. In addition, unions' close relationship with employers means that they can be among the first to know of upcoming apprenticeship and job vacancies, which can then be referred to you and your pre-apprentices before they are advertised openly. Such opportunities, particularly when offered by small, local organisations, may be very competitive and only open for a short duration, so having unions share this information can be critical to your programme's success.

TOP TIP

Utilise a range of partnerships.

A wide range of partnerships, designed to provide comprehensive and holistic support, is important in developing an effective programme. The most effective partnerships produce fluid, seamless pathways for young people to access support and progress towards employment.

CASE STUDY

# Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

Technological University Dublin have used their existing networks to enhance the design and delivery of their programme. In designing Access to Apprenticeship, they set up an advisory board of key stakeholders in the apprenticeship system including policy makers, employers, educators and youth workers. This advisory board is helping to provide strategic direction on progress in the development of the pilot implementation. The board also brings a national perspective to the programme, ensuring it's implemented in line with external developments in the apprenticeship area and eventually, can be mainstreamed into wider policy development.

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

E2C73 have involved a wide range of local and regional economic and social stakeholders in the design and delivery of their programme to ensure it continually meets the needs of the local labour market. Each of these partners have an important role which plays on their strengths and areas of expertise. For example, by keeping good working relationships with social workers who refer young people to the programme, E2C73 can quickly secure extra support for young people if they need it whilst they are on the programme. Many of the young people engaged in the E2C73 programme are disadvantaged and experience financial and social barriers to employment. To enable these young people to overcome the barriers they face E2C73 staff emphasise the importance of accessible and inclusive support. For example, at a practical level public transport is not well established in the area. Without adequate travel allowances from local authorities, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who live some distance away would not be able to attend.

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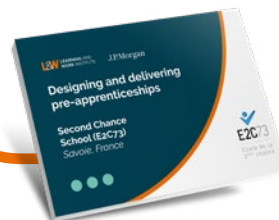
Developing strong partnerships

Marketing the programme to partners

During the early stages of partnership development, you will need to think about the messages you use to engage partners with your programme.

The focus should be on creating a dialogue about the programme's aims and objectives, and its relevance to the local labour market. For example: background information about your organisation, an outline of and rationale for your pre-apprenticeship programme, partners' potential role within the programme, benefits of being a partner and how a partnership could support their organisational objectives.

TOP TIP

Develop a range of marketing activities and materials

Given the diversity of relevant stakeholders, marketing activities need to be varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences.

Marketing activities and materials might include: holding events and briefing sessions; using posters to advertise in community spaces and at the sites of other education and training providers, such as schools; using social media; publishing newsletters; and promoting successful outcomes through case studies and testimonies. Websites are also a key source of information for stakeholders and so should be kept up to date and be easy to navigate

Here are some examples of potential benefits to different partners, that could be incorporated into marketing messages:

Benefits to education and training providers

- Involvement in a pre-apprenticeship allows providers to better serve their local community's skills needs
- Education providers can develop their own networks and provision through access to the pre-apprenticeship's partnership network
- Grants to support pre-apprenticeships can offer providers an additional source of income

Benefits to trade unions

- Access to potential new union members, translating into greater support for the wider union movement
- Learners that better understand the industry they are entering are more likely to retain

employment and thus better positioned to be active within the industry
- Demonstrates a commitment to supporting young people's skills development and employment

Benefits to community organisations and intermediaries

- Promotes a positive image of an organisation committed to supporting young peoples' skills development and employment
- Gain access to your extensive network of contacts and partners, which can be utilised to support their own organisational aims

Benefits to governmental organisations

- Demonstrates a commitment to supporting young people's skills development and employment
- Demonstrates a commitment to businesses through working to ensure that their skills gaps are addressed and supports local economic growth
- Provides them with a learning opportunity from which they can better understand what works and does not work, which can then be translated into more effective policy and practice

Developing strong partnerships

Evaluating your partnership activities

Evaluation of your partnerships will help you to capture the outputs and impact of your activities and identify what is working well and what needs improvement. This can then be acted upon to support the proactive improvement of your pre-apprenticeship programme

In general, you will be evaluating the degree to which your partners successfully meet the needs of your pre-apprentices. However, there might be some specific aspects of your activity that you want to focus on. Use the questions below as a starting point to help you think about what it is that you want to find out and to develop an evaluation plan

The Evaluating your programme section of this resource provides detailed advice on how to plan and embed evaluation activities throughout your programme and ideas on possible evaluation methods and tools

Example questions:

- Who are your partners? (Do you have all the partner types you need, as identified during your partnership planning phase?)

- How many partners do you have?

- Which routes are partners recruited through?

- Which recruitment methods are most effective at engaging partners from target groups and how do you know this?

- What other recruitment approaches could be used?

- Which recruitment approaches do your target partners think are the most effective and what do they think could be improved?

- What do your partners think of the way in which you involve them in your pre-apprenticeship?

- Do your partners have suggestions about different ways they could be involved at this stage of the programme?

- What processes are used to identify and capture information about partner performance?

- Which assessment activities are most effective at capturing information on partner performance and how do you know this?

- What training do staff receive to enable them to work effectively with partners?

- To what degree are partners fulfilling their intended role(s) and meeting your pre-apprentices' needs?

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
A wide range of partnerships are in place to provide comprehensive and holistic support on the programme					
You have identified which partners you currently work with and their contribution to the design or delivery of the programme					
You have thought about if there are gaps in the pre-apprenticeship, such as activity or content, that could be filled by a partner and would benefit young people's progression through the programme.					
Marketing activities for partners are varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences.					
The benefits to prospective partners are tailored in your messaging to the specific organisation.					
Partnerships are continuously evaluated to identify what is working well and what needs improvement.					
You evaluate the degree to which your partners successfully meet the needs of your pre-apprentices.					

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

Overview:

Effective recruitment and initial assessment is essential to ensure that the young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme can benefit from the opportunities and support that you offer and have the best chance of successfully progressing to an apprenticeship.

This section provides advice on marketing your pre-apprenticeship programme to your chosen target group and provides an overview of different approaches you can use to recruit young people. The section concludes with advice on how to assess young peoples' skills, abilities, needs and aspirations at the start of the programme. This will ensure that barriers to learning are identified early, appropriate support can be put in place and suitable work placement 'matches' are identified.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

Recruitment and outreach

The marketing of your pre-apprenticeship programme and the messages that you use are a crucial part of the outreach process and are key to ensuring that you recruit the right young people for your programme.

Young people and parents typically do not have a good understanding of vocational learning and opportunities, so encouraging positive perceptions of such opportunities is an important first step in promoting your pre-apprenticeship programme.

Clear messaging that is focussed on the apprenticeship and job outcomes that young people will achieve by participating in the programme, rather than direct marketing of the programme itself, is key to successful recruitment.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

TOP TIP

Ensure that messaging clearly outlines the benefits of pre-apprenticeships.

Setting out the benefits of a pre-apprenticeship in terms of a direct route to an apprenticeship, a better job, career, and a good wage is most likely to make the programme attractive to young people, and their parents.

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

Jobwise Training have designed a range of marketing materials that explain the core elements of the programme and place a strong focus on the apprenticeship opportunities available to young people on completion of their pre-apprenticeship. Their 'NHS Traineeships' leaflet names specific hospitals who are recruiting for apprenticeship vacancies and the salary that trainees will earn. Marketing also states other clear benefits of the traineeship, including a guaranteed interview with an apprenticeship employer; paid bursary allowance for attendance; assigned mentor and guaranteed four weeks work experience.

Parents/carers can have a significant influence over a young person's decisions about education, training and applying for jobs. It is therefore important that they are aware of pre-apprenticeships and their potential benefits for young people. Provide clear messages about what pre-apprenticeships are, and clearly signpost to further information. This will increase the likelihood of parent/carers encouraging young people to take up a pre-apprenticeship.

CASE STUDY

Qube Learning, *England*

Qube Learning believe that parents have a key role to play in supporting and motivating young people to complete their pre-apprenticeship. They have developed an information leaflet aimed at parents which makes clear what young people can gain by participating in the programme; explains the difference between a traineeship and an apprenticeship and outlines the ways in which trainees are supported on the programme. The leaflet is also used in one-to-one discussions with parents which helps to manage expectations and keep young people focussed on employment outcomes.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

TOP TIP

Develop a marketing strategy for your programme. It will help you to plan appropriate messages and activities for your different target audiences.

TOP TIP

Tailor marketing and messages to target groups.

This is particularly important if your pre-apprenticeship programme is aimed at supporting particular groups of young people to enter an apprenticeship for example, young women black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people or young people with specific additional needs for example, ex-offenders, care leavers or those dealing with mental health difficulties.

Invest in a range of marketing and outreach approaches. Marketing activities need to be varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences. Selecting which activity to run, and with whom, will depend on your chosen target group and the specific aims of your programme.

CASE STUDY

Access to Apprenticeship, Technical University Dublin, *Ireland*

TU Dublin have found it challenging to recruit women to their pre-apprenticeship programme, reflecting a long-standing under representation of females in the apprenticeship sector in Ireland. To address this TU Dublin have run specific initiatives to attract women to the programme, including a targeted open day focusing on engaging young unemployed females in the local area. These events have also helped to engage employers who are keen to diversify their recruitment pools by increasing the number of female apprentices.

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

The voices of young people are a central feature of the marketing and messaging used to advertise E2C73. This includes case studies of young people who have found an apprenticeship or employment through local radio, online and using social media. These approaches help to create positive messages and perceptions about E2C73 and the young people who attend, which in turn is key to improving perceptions of the target group amongst local employers and other partners in the local community.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

When deciding which marketing activities to run, consider:

- Which activities will reach your target group?
- What kinds of messages are most likely to engage and interest young people, and their parents?
- How will you tailor your marketing message to appeal to specific and/or under represented target groups (e.g. ethnicity or gender)

Suggestions for outreach activities:

1. Engage directly with young people

by advertising opportunities through your provider website, online job boards and social media. Websites are a key source of information and so should be kept up to date and easy to navigate. You could have separate sections for young people and parents with printable downloads available. Some providers have their own Facebook page for example and run campaigns using this and other social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to promote their programme. This can be an effective way of encouraging self-referrals to the programme.

Develop a programme 'brand' for your marketing materials, for example eye-catching programme flyers, to help to raise the

profile of the programme with young people. Ensure that the content of materials appeals to the interests of young people and uses language tailored to your target audience. Use posters to advertise in community spaces and at the sites of other education and training providers such as schools.

CASE STUDY

Youth Activation Agency, *Spain*

Youth Activation Agency run a vibrant marketing campaign as part of their outreach work. They designed their own brand, conduct local presentations about the offer and run open days for the general public. The agency actively engage the local media, and make full use of their website and social media to promote their programmes.

A core strand of the agency's outreach work are their youth ambassadors or street counsellors. These are young people, recruited from local youth organisations, to reach out to target groups outside of conventional communication channels. Ambassadors can be particularly effective in 'selling' the programme to young people as they are of a similar age and use the same language as potential participants.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

Suggestions for outreach activities:

2. Promotional events and open days

held throughout the year, provide opportunity for potential participants, and their parents, to get a more detailed understanding of what your programme offers. Barclays for example proactively works to overcome young people's barriers to engagement by hosting "insight sessions", where young people are brought into the organisation to see the kind of support they would receive and hear current apprentices' stories. Barts Health NHS Trust, England also engages young people through timetabled open days and provides local people with structured pathways into its own apprenticeships.

Events can be run in a variety of ways. Consider holding events tailored to different audiences to ensure you are engaging with as many young people as possible from your programme's target group. For example, you may wish to run an event aimed at young people who have children. You could hold the session at a local Children's Centre, or ask local schools to promote it for you. You may also want to state that there will be supervised activities for children, so that parents can concentrate on finding out about your programme.

If your target group includes young people whose first language is not the native language you may want to emphasise that your programmes includes language support, in your marketing. You could run a recruitment session in a community venue where speakers of non-native languages live, and engage the support of community organisations who represent such groups.

You could involve employers or previous programme participants in events, speaking about their own experiences if they are from similar backgrounds or share similar characteristics. For example, it can be inspiring for a young person who has mental health difficulties, or is an ex-offender, to hear from an employer who has personal experiences of successfully overcoming similar challenges. Employers who benefit from offering work placements may be willing to be ambassadors, promoting the programme to other employers, through business networks.

These kind of events are particularly effective when they are interactive and provide opportunities for young people, and parents/guardians to ask questions of providers and employers.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

3. Fully brief potential referral agencies

about your programme and its target groups working in partnership where possible to maximise referrals. Relevant agencies can include education providers; local authorities, employment services; other programmes working with young people; Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs), or; specialist teams that work with young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Having a variety of referral pathways ensures that the young people who are least likely to access education and training have multiple opportunities to do so.

Provide clear messages about your provision, the target cohort and its potential benefits.

This will enable these organisations to pass on accurate information about your programme and increase the likelihood of young people taking up a pre-apprenticeship.

You could arrange 1-1 meetings with individual agencies and partners or invite potential referral agencies to an awareness raising session or to see the programme in action. This ensures that key agencies have good insight into the programme and demonstrates successful progression into apprenticeships

Source Skills Academy, for example, invite local Job Centrestaff to observe their programme delivery. This enables them to gain a more in-depth understanding of the programme. As a result, JCP advisers are now more informed about the programme and are able to identify suitable clients and give them an accurate overview of the pre-apprenticeship programme and the benefits of participating before making a referral.

Consider taking along young people (current or former trainees) from your pre-apprenticeship programme to chat informally with potential participants or to run a short session.

Produce a short promotional film about the programme and send it to different agencies. Success stories are another useful way of highlighting the effectiveness of your programme in supporting young people into apprenticeships. Develop some case studies about young people who have successfully completed the programme and gone on to an apprenticeship, including positive feedback from employers who have hosted work placements and/or recruited young people from your programme

4. Target young people who unsuccessfully applied for your apprenticeship programme

or are referred from other programmes which do not meet their needs.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

Initial assessment

Assessment of young people's skills and capabilities prior to programme entry, is essential to ensure that your programme is tailored to the needs of young people and that appropriate support is put in place.

Careful assessment will also help you to determine if young people are appropriate for your programme and enable young people to make an informed choice about whether it is the right path for them. Participants are then more likely to fully engage with the programme, increasing the chances of successful completion and progression to an apprenticeship.

Most importantly, effective assessment will help to ensure a successful match between young people and their work placement host, providing the best opportunity for a young person to gain an apprenticeship or employment - either with their placement employer or a different employer.

Such matching is reliant on comprehensive assessment information. The most effective entry and recruitment systems use some form of basic literacy, language and numeracy skills assessment combined with in-depth discussions with tutors or support staff. Typically, these interviews explore young people's motivations for joining the programme, career aspirations, educational background and experiences; prior achievement; personal and financial circumstances, barriers to learning; learning styles and preferences and other information that might be relevant to their long-term progression to an apprenticeship e.g. criminal records.

This holistic assessment ensures that the provider can put comprehensive support in place to enable each young person to progress to an apprenticeship.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

TOP TIP

Use online programmes to help with initial assessments of language, numeracy and other basic skills.

Ensure that young people are offered support to complete computer-based assessments

Tried and tested online platforms such as **BKSB** and **Skills Builder** which provide initial and diagnostic assessments and learning resources for English, maths and ICT together with learning style assessments, are commonly used by UK pre-apprenticeship providers to assess numeracy and language skills levels. Programmes such as **OneFile** and **ForSkills** provide additional resources such as customised forms, portfolio journals and quality policies and tools.

CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

A key element of JOBLINGE's recruitment process is an admissions activity in which young people are 'tested' through completion of voluntary work on a two-day charitable project, before being accepted on the programme. During the project, staff informally assess young people's suitability for, and commitment to, joining the programme. This might be demonstrated through consistently arriving on time for work or the ability to work with others in a team, for example. Staff interview each young person to find out more about their lives and why they want to start at JOBLINGE. This provides opportunity for JOBLINGE staff to get to know the young people and for participants to develop trust in programme staff.

CASE STUDY

Hackney College, *England*

Before starting a traineeship with Hackney College, all young people undertake a BKSB Assessment and receive information, advice and guidance to identify any barriers to joining the programme, for example the need for financial support, help to manage home circumstances or one-to-one support. Employers attend and meet trainees to explain about the sector, the job and apprenticeship opportunities available and discuss the training options within their company. The aim is to ensure that trainees are committed to the traineeship programme, have understood their responsibilities, the employer's expectations and the progression opportunities that will be available to them if their traineeship is successful.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

E2C73's initial assessment process informs each young person's individual programme. Once young people have joined the programme, they attend an induction interview to discuss their personal, social and financial circumstances in more detail. The information collected from this interview is then used to develop a learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on the programme is tailored to their individual needs.

TOP TIP

Consider encouraging staff who are involved with assessing and delivering to gain an information, advice and guidance (IAG) qualification.

This helps to ensure that the right young people are on your programme.

Some of the most successful pre- apprenticeship programmes use information from assessment to personalise the programme for participants.

TOP TIP

Ensure that assessment processes and data are handled sensitively so that it is not perceived as a selection tool and/or a barrier to entry. This is not only important in the entry and recruitment stage, but throughout delivery as learners may be reluctant to share personal information in the early stages of the programme,
Providing opportunities for young people to speak to staff on a 1-1 basis throughout the course of the programme is essential to encourage disclosure of additional needs. In programmes which include mentoring, the mentor/mentee relationship can also provide opportunities to discuss any difficulties young people are facing that may act as barriers to programme completion.

TOP TIP

Develop robust initial assessment and IAG processes to enable you to effectively match trainees to the right employer and sector.

This helps to keep trainees motivated by their placement and increases the likelihood of progression.

Recruitment and initial assessment of young people

Evaluating recruitment and initial assessment activities

Evaluation of your recruitment and initial assessment activities will help you to identify what is working well and areas for improvement, and to capture the outcome and impact of these activities, supporting the continuous improvement of your entry and recruitment processes.

In general, you will be evaluating the effectiveness of your recruitment and initial assessment activities in supporting young people to progress to apprenticeship opportunities. However, there might be some specific aspects of your activity that you want to focus on. Use the questions below as a starting point to help you think about what it is that you want to find out about your recruitment and initial assessment activities and to develop an evaluation plan.

The **Evaluating your pre-apprenticeship programme** section of this resource provides detailed advice on how to plan and embed evaluation activities throughout your programme and ideas on possible evaluation methods and tools.

Example questions:

- Who are your participants? (Does the demographic profile of participants match your target group?)
- How many participants completed the programme?
- Through what routes are participants recruited?
- Which recruitment methods are most effective at engaging participants from target groups and how do you know this?
- What other approaches could be used?
- Which recruitment activities do young people think are the most effective and what could be improved?
- Do young people have suggestions about different ways they could be involved at this stage of the programme?
- What do referral partners think about the way in which you involve them in recruiting young people to the programme?
- What processes are used to identify and capture information about individual young people's skills, capabilities and needs?
- Which assessment activities are most effective at capturing information on young people's skills, capabilities and needs and how do you know this?
- What training do staff receive to help them to determine individual learners' needs?

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
Messaging clearly outlines the benefits of the programme					
Diverse marketing approaches and a combination of activities are used					
A range of recruitment activities are in place to directly engage with young people					
Referral agencies are aware of the programme and target groups					
Initial assessment activity is undertaken, using IT where appropriate, prior to programme entry					
Initial assessment includes both qualitative and basic skills assessment					
Data from initial assessment is used to match young people and employers					

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Overview:

The quality of the activities and support delivered on your pre-apprenticeship is key to ensuring that young people have a positive experience, complete their programme and progress to an apprenticeship. This section of the resource is dedicated to guiding you through best practice in programme delivery. It includes a series of case studies and top tips for programme delivery.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes vary in the ways in which they are delivered depending on the aims of the programme. For example, some programmes seek to provide young people who are fairly close to the labour market with a refresher in basic skills, or the opportunity to gain specific experience, before supporting them to engage with employers. Other programmes are more intensively focused on reintroducing young people to education and training, before progressing to an apprenticeship.

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

- Preparatory work
- Delivery of basic skills (literacy and numeracy)
- Individual support e.g. mentoring and information, advice and guidance (IAG)
- Designing and delivering work experience placements
- Flexible delivery

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

CASE STUDY

## Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

The programme at Tomillo Foundation in Madrid, Spain, which lasts two years, is made up of three phases, whereby young people progress through the programme developing their personal, professional and social skills in that order, before progressing to work experience. This sequenced approach helps young people become more confident, skilled and clearer about their career aspirations as they progress through. Phase one lasts for four weeks and aims to re-introduce learners to an education and training environment; to rediscover a positive view of education and work; and to prepare for positive engagement in training. This intensive period of re-introduction is key to engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and enabling them to sustain their progress. During this phase, young people complete their first work experience and work with staff to develop a personal programme for the next phase.

Preparatory work

Pre-apprenticeship programmes should contain activities which focus on developing young people's 'soft skills' 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.

Soft skills or transversal skills help young people to work effectively and can apply to almost any job role. Soft skills include communication, confidence, punctuality, listening and resilience. These can be developed through, for example, team problem-solving activities, learner-led presentations, workshops and interactive classroom lessons. Such activities can be delivered as part of your regular content-based lessons, or separately as part of a 'soft skills' module/unit within your pre-apprenticeship programme.
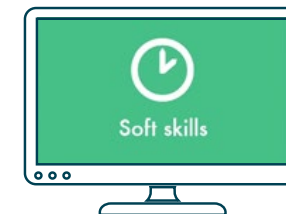
Employability skills are the skills required to successfully navigate the job-application process. Employability skills include job searching, CV writing, interviewing, dressing appropriately and learning how to engage in a professional way with an employer. These can be developed in a range of ways, including through job-searching sessions, CV guidance, mock interviews and attending job fairs. These activities can be embedded within your regular content-based lessons, or separately as part of an 'employability skills' unit.

The **What Employers Want** website includes information and activities to help young people understand what employers are looking for, including soft skills and employability skills.

The way in which activities are sequenced is important in preparing young people for work experience, and their progression to an apprenticeship. Activities should be sequenced in a way which allows young people to gradually build skills, confidence and knowledge in preparation for work experiences. This is particularly important as young people on a pre-apprenticeship programme typically need support to develop their confidence and self-esteem as well their employability skills, before exposure to the workplace.

The **OECD Skills** for Jobs database provides country level information on skills, abilities and knowledge areas sought by employer

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Skills sampling

This approach provides young people with the opportunity to learn and experience a number of different employment sectors, through a series of short courses for example.

Each short course provides a basic overview of the sector and can offer an opportunity for workplace experience to those learners who wish to pursue it. This delivery model is particularly valuable for learners who do not yet know what sector(s) they wish to work in and want exposure to a range of employers in order to make informed choices about their future career paths.

TOP TIP

Be flexible. Whatever model you choose, you should always aim to adapt your model to respond to any changes, such as young people's needs, the local labour marker, including any changes in the skills requirements of apprenticeship programmes you are targeting. This ensures that your programme remains relevant and effective.

TOP TIP

Consider a roll-on, roll-off programme. A flexible/rolling programme will mean that new young people can join quickly, rather than having to wait until the start of a new academic year. This will enable you to support more young people through the pre-apprenticeship within a given timeframe. It is also popular with referral organisations because it means there is no time delay between making a referral and a young person starting on a programme. A roll-on, roll-off delivery model may therefore increase the likelihood of an external agency making referrals to your programme, providing an effective way of growing your programme.

CASE STUDY

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

TU Dublin pre-apprentices spend their first 10 weeks in a classroom, with each week centred on a different apprenticeship sector. For example, young people spend time learning about aircraft mechanics for one week, before focusing on painting and decorating the next. Each short course provides learners with a basic knowledge of the sector and an opportunity to work on a practical project in that sector. Young people value the opportunity to gain insight into sectors which they might not have considered before, and importantly, can explore which sectors they might want to pursue through an apprenticeship.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

TOP TIP

Preparatory activities should be a regular fixture of your programme, offering your learners the opportunity to apply and develop their skills over time, ensuring continuous development so that they are as skilled as possible when they begin engaging with employers and seeking apprenticeships.

CASE STUDY

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

On TU Dublin's pre-apprenticeship programme, each Wednesday is known as 'personal development and employer engagement' day, where young people engage in activities related to improving their employability skills such as CV development, interview preparation or employer engagement. Weekly reflections are built into the programme to give young people experience of the assessment and feedback processes in an apprenticeship.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Delivering basic skills (literacy and numeracy)

The delivery of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy in pre-apprenticeships should be given particular attention. Some young people can be resistant to classroom-based learning because of negative prior experiences in compulsory education. As a result, you should attempt to embed basic skills training throughout the wider pre-apprenticeship programme. This embedded approach can also be more resource-efficient as it avoids the need for additional lessons which focus exclusively on basic skills.

Basic skills can be delivered as part of wider vocational content, for example, in a construction focused pre-apprenticeship, young people can be encouraged to think about concepts such as 'area' and 'perimeter' throughout vocational learning.

Basic skills can also be embedded throughout wider employability content, for example by encouraging young people to think about literacy such as grammar and punctuation, when developing a CV, or in preparing for mock interviews with employers.

CASE STUDY

Tomillo Foundation, *Spain*

Tomillo Foundation adopt Project Based Learning (PBL) methods during year two of their pre-apprenticeship programme whereby young people learn about their chosen vocational subject and develop key professional and basic skills. Young people work as part of a group to design and develop a team project relevant to their chosen subject, utilising and developing their basic skills throughout. In computer science for example, young people could be tasked with designing a household composter which helps to dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly manner. Such approaches are considered effective in supporting young people who are furthest away from the labour market. The excellent progression outcomes achieved by young people, with 97% of participants progressing to an intermediate apprenticeship in 2017, is indicative of the ways in which well-designed and well-delivered programmes can support young people furthest away from the labour market to achieve good outcomes.

TOP TIP

Ensure that basic skills are delivered in flexible and creative ways.

This will make learning engaging and relevant to young people's lives and employment goals. This could be through contextualised activities or delivery in the workplace.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Mentoring and support for young people

Many pre-apprenticeship providers include some form of mentoring as part of their support package for young people. Offering young people this type of personalised support gives them time and space to talk through their experiences and aspirations and highlight any difficulties they are facing. This means that tutors and staff have better intelligence about problems as and when they arise and are therefore more able to respond in an appropriate and timely manner. This helps to retain young people and improve their experience of the programme.

Mentors are typically provider staff, for example, tutors or specialist support staff; peers (e.g. other young people who have successfully progressed to an apprenticeship); employer representatives or people who work for partner organisations.

Mentoring is typically provided through regular scheduled one to one support meetings but can also be a more ad hoc arrangement based on emerging needs, or a combination of both.

For some young people on pre-apprenticeship programmes, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, mentors may be the only available adult role model. Having access to someone who cares, and listens is often a new experience, providing opportunities to develop young people's feelings of confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth and helping them to better understand and overcome any barriers to employment they are facing.

Some providers use more than one type of mentor to provide specific support at different stages of their programme.
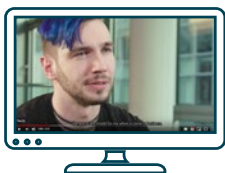
CASE STUDY

JOBLINGE, *Germany*

Two weeks into the pre-apprenticeship programme, each JOBLINGE participant is matched with their own personal volunteer mentor. Mentors share their professional and life experience, acting as a role model and source of support to the young person for the duration of the programme.

Mentors meet weekly with participants, providing encouragement as they progress through each stage of the programme. This helps to motivate young people, and reduce the chances of them dropping out, in the face of any challenges they encounter at home, in their wider lives or during a work experience for example. The mentor acts as confidant, coach and role model guiding the participant through the programme and helping to deal with any issues that arise.

Mentors are professionally trained and supervised and are mainly recruited from partner companies. This helps to maintain employer buy-in to the programme.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Jobwise Training, *England*

Young people on the Jobwise Traineeship are assigned a personal mentor who they meet on the first day of the programme usually in an informal setting, such as a coffee shop. This early engagement provides the opportunity for mentors to build rapport with young people from the start of the programme. Mentors are staff team members who are graduates of the pre-apprenticeship and have secured employment with Jobwise Training. This provides inspiration for young people, enabling them to clearly see that the programme leads to positive outcomes.

When young people first begin their work experience, they are allocated a workplace mentor, who is independent from the workplace manager. Weekly reviews between young people and their workplace mentor ensure that young people have the opportunity to highlight if they need additional support, to reflect on their progress so far, to create short and long-term goals and to make suggestions about other aspects of the workplace they would like to experience. The review process also gives employers opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of work, achievements of young people and to report on any changes in their employability skills since beginning the placement. This gives both employers and young people the chance to sit back and reflect on progress.


Mentoring can be particularly important in programmes which specifically target young people from facing socio economic challenges or barriers. For example, Millwall Community Trust in London, which works with young people who have had negative educational experiences, has a strong focus on addressing emotional/behavioural barriers that might hamper young people's success. Tutors are used as mentors who address any wider personal issues that may act as barriers to programme completion.

Barclays offer a match mentoring system in which young people are matched to staff mentors who have similar experiences. This encourages disclosure of additional needs (especially health conditions or disabilities).

Useful links to advice on mentoring

The following websites contain useful guidance on providing mentoring and other types of one-to-one support for young people.
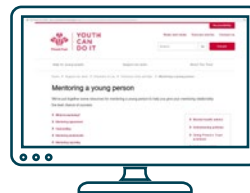
Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

CASE STUDY

CT Skills, *UK*

To ensure that young people are recruited onto a programme that meets their individual needs, all of CT Skills' employment support officers undertake a Level 4 information, advice and guidance (IAG) qualification. Their placement officer is also IAG qualified. This enables him to not only offer advice and guidance to trainees, but also to employers about the support and supervision they provide to trainees, and their recruitment activities. CT Skills consider that equipping staff with strong IAG skills has been important in enabling them to develop tailored individual plans that prepare trainees to progress to an apprenticeship or employment, at the right time for them.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Participants on pre-apprenticeships programmes often don't have high levels of awareness about education, training and employment options.

High quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is important in supporting young people to make informed decisions about their future and helps their labour market transitions. It is crucial that impartial educational and career guidance services are continuously available to young people.

Information, advice and guidance can be provided in two main ways:

Internally: In practice, this requires staff who have the necessary skills to provide IAG, either through recruitment of staff who have these qualifications, or through upskilling existing staff to gain the qualifications.

Externally: You might want to consider partnering with an external organisation who have expertise in providing IAG services for young people.

Whichever approach is best suited for your organisation, Information, Advice and Guidance should:

Be impartial: IAG should be based on a young person's needs and on up to date labour market information and intelligence about opportunities available locally and nationally.

Be timely: Young people should receive timely advice and guidance that supports key decisions that they need to make, leading to action planning as appropriate

TOP TIP

Consider recruiting staff with IAG qualifications or upskilling existing staff.

This approach enables providers to offer effective information, advice and guidance and to offer strong support to work experience employers which contributes to good progression outcomes.

TOP TIP

Consider encouraging staff who are involved with assessing and delivering to gain an information, advice and guidance (IAG) qualification.

This helps to ensure that the right learners are on the right programmes. It also improves the support you can offer to employers, which builds positive relationships.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Delivering work experience placements

The work experience placement, in whatever form, is the most important aspect of effective pre-apprenticeship provision. Work experience provides invaluable real-life exposure to the world of work for young people. For this reason, work experience placements are a key component of all pre-apprenticeship programmes and are often integral to achieving programme aims.

The most effective placements are personalised and tailored to the needs, interests, and ambitions of the individual young people and employers involved and involve them in the planning process. The key factors that are important for good quality work experience include:

- Careful matching of young people and employers
- Having clear work plans and objectives for young people and employers
- Opportunities for feedback and reviewing progress
- Mentoring and supervision
- Exit interviews and formal recognition

1. Careful matching of young people and employers

Sourcing work experience opportunities

There are a number of different ways in which you can match young people with employers who offer work experience.

- You may have employers who are engaged with the programme, which is tailored to meet their needs. Young people are then specifically recruited to these specific work experience opportunities.

- You may take a wider approach - where young people express an interest in working in a specific sector or role, you then recruit an appropriate employer to offer such work experience opportunities.

CASE STUDY

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

TU Dublin's two-week work experience takes place at the end of the programme to ensure young people gain exposure to the workplace environment and experience the reality of apprentice training. TU Dublin work with a selection of employers from across apprenticeship sectors to ensure young people have access to work experience in a sector of their choice.

Employers who were involved in the Access to Apprenticeship pilot provided positive feedback on the programme. They valued the opportunity to engage with the young people and to see their level of interest in pursuing an apprenticeship. Employers also thought it was good for young people to learn what would be expected of them as an apprentice. Young people who complete the programme especially value the work experience element, highlighting that gaining experience in the workplace with an employer helped to clarify which apprenticeship sector they are interested in pursuing.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme might benefit from completing multiple work experience placements. This approach allows young people to gain valuable experience of different work environments, for example with different sized employers, or in different sectors. This has the added benefit of allowing them to make informed decisions about their career choices, as well as building a well-developed CV. .

TOP TIP

Engage local organisations that provide access to a range of employers, for example trade organisations or employer federations.
This increases access to work experience placements as well as other forms of engagement with employers

TOP TIP

Focus on securing work experience with employers who are committed to having a real apprenticeship or job vacancy available for a young person at the end of the placement.
This approach is more likely to lead to a positive and quick employment outcome.

CASE STUDY

bbw SH, *Germany*

bbw SH in Germany provides extensive and specialist support for young people with learning disabilities, mental health difficulties and other needs. They operate a vocational rehabilitation centre and young people take part in work experience workshops for a range of professions, in the centre. This programme aims to prepare young people with extensive needs, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the skills required for integration into the labour market. Young people have access to in-house work experience coupled with specialist support.

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

Work experiences play a key role in helping young people at E2C73 to explore and realise their personal career aspirations. Young people alternate between work experiences and in-house training for the full duration of the programme. This is a continuous and developmental process which is ongoing until a young person secures an apprenticeship place, or another progression outcome. Rotating work experiences in this way has real benefits for young people as it provides a chance for them to explore different career paths, to build a realistic understanding of work in a given sector, and helps them to build a professional and well-rounded CV.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

2. Recruitment and selection for work experience

While a typical recruitment process may not apply to young people seeking work experience, you should explain the recruitment and selection processes to young people so they will have some insight into the normal processes for finding and applying for a job.

Preparing for work experience through mock interviews, for example, provides another opportunity for young people to develop their soft skills and employability skills, so make sure you provide plenty of information and reassure them as much as you can about navigating their journey into the labour market.

Young people on pre-apprenticeships may have little or no experience of interviews, so conventional interview techniques may not be appropriate. They may also lack confidence, so, when interviewing young people for work experience, having an informal and semi-structured approach to the interview is advisable.

Consider using a variety of interview techniques, such as question and answer, role play, presentation, tasks and exercises, to vary the format and to ensure people with different learning styles can take part and are provided with the opportunity to showcase their strengths.

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

The process for matching young people with a suitable employer is carried out by a dedicated team. The team make decisions about which young people are work-ready, and which employers are most to suited to a young person. Where young people express an interest in working in a specific sector, the team ensure they embark on a relevant work placement. Appropriately matching young people and employers helps to develop good relationships, giving young people and the employer reassurance the placement is a good fit.

Young people undergo a standard application process in which they complete an application form and attend an interview with the employer. This is an opportunity for young people to learn of their responsibilities and an employer's expectations. It also helps to ensure that trainees understand that they need to show strong commitment to the training in order to progress into an apprenticeship.

Work placements are positively viewed as a type of probationary period where young people and employers have the chance to test each other out to see if they are a good match for an apprenticeship.

TOP TIP

Help the young person prepare by thinking about what interview questions might be asked, considering their answers and practising a mock interview.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

3. What should the work experience include?

Employers who take young people for work experience should have a clear set of tasks and/or a work plan for the work experience placement. The work plan should be developed by the employer, often in consultation with the provider. If the employer is a regular provider of work experience, the work plan can be a standard plan which is adapted for each young person. The work plan should be flexible and should also be tailored to the young person's individual skills and abilities.

From the outset, it is important that you are clear with employers about what is required from them in providing a positive work placement and expectations in terms of identifying an apprenticeship or employment opportunity for each young person. Employers are far more likely to engage with the pre-apprenticeship if they understand their role and the possible outcomes and benefits for their business.

TOP TIP

Be clear with employers about what is required from them when providing work experience opportunities; especially if there are expectations for them to identify an apprenticeship or employment opportunity for young people who complete their work experience.

Choosing length and intensity

The number of days and hours a young person spends at the work place should be agreed with the young person and the employer. As young people on pre-apprenticeships are seeking to progress to an apprenticeship opportunity, you may need to allow some flexibility around hours of attendance on placement to allow them time off to look for jobs and/or to attend job interviews. However, while working hours can be flexible to adapt to individual needs, they should still provide a representative experience of the real world of work.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

What tasks should they do?

 If work experience is to be beneficial to both the employer and the young person, it is imperative that the young person is given as much insight into the world of work as possible.

It is often good practice to offer a 'mini-project' for young people to work on at points during the placement, which could relate to an area you are particularly keen to get young people's views on, or something they are interested in.

The work experience is about supporting young people to develop their skills to increase their opportunities in the labour market. Identifying some work-shadowing opportunities and, where possible, assigning them a concrete task that they could work on with supervision, but with scope to use their ideas and creativity, are ways of giving the young person a real flavour of the world of work.

Remember that the young person on work experience is there to learn, so it is important that whatever work they are doing keeps them active and engaged throughout their placement to ensure that their levels of motivation are kept up and they have a positive experience of the world of work and what it means to be part of a team.

Supervision and mentoring

Young people on work experience should have a dedicated person who has ring-fenced time to supervise them. In addition, where possible they should be allocated a separate mentor or coach who can support the young person more informally. A mentor can provide the person on work experience with advice, outside the more formal relationship with their named supervisor.

A 'buddy' (who could be a junior member of the team keen to develop their own skills) can offer valuable support to the young person. They 'look after' the young person during their placement, check how things are going, take them to lunch, help them with any questions and act as a person of contact more generally.

Work experiences should be well monitored so that both the young person and the employer benefit from the experience, and any problems can be identified and dealt with before they threaten the successful completion of the placement.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

4. Reviewing young people's progress

Best practice in delivering work experience includes giving young people the opportunity to reflect on and learn from their experiences. Equally, employers and training providers should have opportunities to learn from and improve their practices of providing work experience.

Informally, this could mean having regular conversations with young people, reflecting on progress throughout the work experience. It might also be useful to schedule a more formal review mid-way through the work experience to assess the individual's progress and consider additional ways they can develop for the remainder of the placement.

Regular review meetings, whether formal or informal, provide opportunities to identify areas for improvement, or issues that arise for a young person who may not have prior experience of the workplace. Feedback should always be provided in a constructive way that helps to develop a young person's confidence.

CASE STUDY

Jobwise Training, *England*

At Jobwise Training, all young people are allocated a workplace mentor who is independent from the workplace manager. Regular workplace reviews, that include clear goal setting and opportunities for reflection, enable young people to remain focused on their goals and see the progress they are making towards an apprenticeship.

A weekly review is carried out between young people and their workplace mentor using a standardised form to guide the process. This ensures young people have the opportunity to indicate if and when they need extra support in the workplace, to reflect on their progress so far, and to create short- and long-term goals. Young people can also make suggestions about aspects of the workplace they would like to experience going forward.

This review process also gives employers the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of work, achievements of young people, and to report on any changes in their employability skills since beginning the placement. This gives young people and employers the chance to sit back and reflect on progress.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Formal recognition of learning

The purpose of the work experience is to enhance the young person's employability, provide real experience and meaningful content to put on their CV. The more learning and training you can provide that can result in some formal accreditation, or that is easily transferable and recognisable by other employers, the more helpful this is to the young person who needs to demonstrate their employability to potential employers.

Conducting exit interviews

As a work experience placement draws to a close, regardless of how long it has lasted, it is good practice to arrange a final review meeting with the young person to discuss a number of issues. Exit interviews can either be conducted by the employer providing work experience, or by the training provider towards the end of a young person's time on the full pre-apprenticeship programme.

During the exit interview, the young person could be asked questions such as:

- What have you learned and how have you developed during this work experience?
- How well have you met your personal goals?
- What are your strengths and areas for improvement?
- What have been your proudest achievements?
- In what ways are you better prepared for the jobs market after completing this work experience?

CASE STUDY

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

Young people on TU Dublin's Access to Apprenticeship receive a certificate of participation at the end of their programme, recognising the skills developed during the programme and the completion of their work placement. This is an important for providing a sense of achievement for young people and supporting their progression to an apprenticeship.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Flexible provision

To ensure that your programme can specifically address the individual needs of participants, a flexible delivery model is an essential element in your programme design.

Young people have individual barriers to employment; developing flexible and tailored programmes to address specific barriers will increase progression rates.

TOP TIP

Ensure your delivery model allows you to spend sufficient time with a young person prior to them starting the programme. This is important in enabling you to understand their needs, strengths and weaknesses and to build up trust. It will also enable you to plan an effective programme for each young person from the beginning.

A flexible approach is particularly important in engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who often face specific barriers to labour market entry.

There are a number of ways in which you can flex your programme to adapt to the needs of individual young people, such as;

- Providing more, or less intensive basic skills training

CASE STUDY

Redcar Adult Learning Service (ALS), *UK*

Redcar ALS offers a flexible programme ranging from 6-12 weeks depending on the requirements of the trainee and the work experience placement offered by the employer. The six-week programme is more intense and is aimed at trainees who might already have the necessary English and maths qualifications and just require more work experience and help with their employability skills. Trainees who need to do English and maths, and require more intensive employability skills support, usually follow the longer programme.

- Adapting the types and level of personal support offered.

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

E2C73 use holistic information collected from an initial assessment to develop a learning and development plan for each young person, which ensures their time on the programme is tailored to their individual needs. This ensures that each young person can address their individual barriers to gaining an apprenticeship and entering the labour market, maximising the prospect of a successful outcome.

This process is designed to be an empowering process for young people which enables them to develop a strong sense of commitment to the programme and confidence that they can succeed.

CASE STUDY

Qube, *UK*

Qube are in the process of developing a bespoke model, working in partnership with the National Autistic Society (NAS), to start delivering pre-apprenticeships (traineeships) for people with autism. In preparation staff will complete a two-day course on how to deliver the programme to trainees with autism. Employers, who currently work with NAS offering work experience, will be given the opportunity to offer a traineeship which Qube hope will create a pathway for progression to apprenticeships for young people with autism.

Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme

Evaluating programme delivery

Tracking young people

Participant feedback can be used to continually develop the content of a programme, if used in a timely and analytical way.

By monitoring participant journeys and experiences, the programme can be more effectively tailored to the needs of currently participating young people. Feedback from young people can be gathered through methods such as;

- Surveys or questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus groups with young people
- The 'evaluating your programme' section of this resource provides detailed guidance on evaluating your programme

TOP TIP

Staff involved in the programme who have regular contact with young people, independent from tutors or employers, can play a useful role in collecting feedback from young people.

TOP TIP

Information collected from exit interviews provide an additional opportunity to learn from young people as a way of reviewing and improving programmes.

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
The pre-apprenticeship contains activities which focus on developing young people's soft skills and employability skills					
Programme activities are sequenced in a way which allows young people to gradually build skills, confidence and knowledge in preparation for work experiences					
Basic skills are delivered in flexible and creative ways to make learning engaging and relevant to young people's lives and employment goals.					
The pre-apprenticeship includes good quality, personalised support for young people, such as mentoring or Information and Guidance provision					
Young people are carefully matched with work experience opportunities, taking in to consideration individual skills, interests and career goals.					
The focus is on securing work experience with employers who are committed to having a real apprenticeship or job vacancy at the end of the placement.					
Employers who take young people for work experience are supported to have a clear set of tasks and/or a work plan for the work experience placement.					
The work experience plan is be developed by the you, the employer, and young people					
Young people on work experience are given as much insight into the world of work as possible.					
Work experiences are well monitored so that both the young person and the employer benefit from the experience					
Delivering work experience includes giving young people the opportunity to reflect on and learn from their experiences					
Young people's achievements on work experience are formally recognised, e.g. certificates of completion					
The delivery model is flexible so that it can address the individual needs of participants					
Feedback form employers and young people are continually used develop the content of a programme					

Evaluating your programme

Evaluation: why does it matter?

Evaluation is about making an assessment about the value and quality of the pre-apprenticeship. Collecting evidence about the value and quality of your pre-apprenticeship programme can answer questions such as; what works and why it has worked? What hasn't worked, and why? And what difference has the programme made to young people, employers and the wider community?

Good quality evaluation will not only provide feedback on the effectiveness of the programme but will also help to determine whether the programme is appropriate for the target group, whether there are any problems with its implementation and the support provided, and whether there are any ongoing concerns that need to be resolved as the programme is developed.

Effective monitoring and evaluation can help you:

- Assess and demonstrate effectiveness in programme design and delivery
- Improve internal learning and decision making about your pre-apprenticeship
- Empower participants by involving them in monitoring and evaluation
- Ensure you are delivering the best possible outcomes for those taking part
- Understand and demonstrate the impact of your programme
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of delivering the pre-apprenticeship
- Ensure accountability to key stakeholders
- Share key learning with other providers
- Support new bids for further funding

We encourage you to think positively about the purposes of evaluation. Taking time to focus on what is working well, what needs changing, and what has surprised you – all adds to the learning and development of your pre-apprenticeship.

This section provides practical guidance on how to evaluate your pre-apprenticeship programme:

Identifying evaluation aims • Planning the evaluation • Choosing your evaluation approach • External evaluations • Using the evaluation evidence • Dissemination and promotion

Evaluating your programme

TOP TIP

To make sure your evaluation is robust, you should develop an evaluation plan.

This will ensure that evaluation is embedded in your programme and captures the information you need from the beginning.

In general, the plan should include the following broad elements:

1. Why you are evaluating the programme
2. What you will be evaluating
3. How you will evaluate it
4. When you will evaluate it

1. Planning the evaluation

During the early stages, it's a good idea to know how you aim to evaluate the programme and what types of information you are looking for. The following suggestions, top tips and key considerations will help you to start developing an evaluation plan.

Key considerations when planning your evaluation activities?

1. Think about what you want to gain from evaluation. Why are you doing it?

2. Which elements of the programme do you want to assess?

3. Who should be involved in the evaluation?

4. How will you collect the information?

5. How will you make best use of the information?

Which elements of the programme do you want to assess?
All pre-apprenticeship programmes will have multiple elements, such as in-house training, a work placement, and mentoring for example. Monitoring and evaluation therefore, needs to reflect this.

Who should be involved in the evaluation?
To ensure evaluation activities are relevant to all programme stakeholders it is important that you consider their needs. You will therefore need to identify the key internal and external stakeholders and decide how to involve them in the process.

This will also depend on the aims and objectives of your programme. Examples of people to include are:

(a) young people participating in the programme

(b) employers involved in the programme

(c) other stakeholders in the wider community e.g. schools or youth organisations

(d) external stakeholders e.g. funders, local and national policy makers

Visit Section 5 on Partnerships to think about partners to engage in your programme

Evaluating your programme

TOP TIP

Introducing a form of post-training support to the programme provides an opportunity to collect destinations and outcomes information about young people.

2. Choosing your evaluation approach

Evaluation activity usually combines three or four different methods to gather evidence. Some methods are used to supply facts and figures (quantitative) others are better for recording people's experiences or feelings about the programme (qualitative). A balanced mix of the two is usually most effective. Before considering which methods to choose, think about what approach best suits your organisation and what use you will make of the evidence.

Each of the following approaches can be embedded throughout the duration of your pre-apprenticeship, and/or distinctly employed as a formal method of evaluation, for example at the end of a block of work placements.

Internal Monitoring

'Monitoring' is the collection and analysis of information, undertaken while the pre-apprenticeship is ongoing. Collecting monitoring information is the most commonly adopted method for appraising a programme and is a simple yet effective way of monitoring programme performance.

The monitoring data you collect and analyse should link to the aims and objectives of the pre-apprenticeship programme. Internal monitoring should be closely linked to the design of your programme, including who the target group are, and what outcomes they achieve.

To begin to understand the success of your pre-apprenticeship programme, you should consider collecting and analysing monitoring information on the following factors:

- The referral routes into the programme
- The number of participants; the number of completers
- Key participant characteristics, e.g. gender and ethnicity.
- Time spent with each participant, and;
- Apprenticeship and work outcomes of participants

The above factors are considered as 'core' information, that would be expected across all pre-apprenticeship programmes. However, you may wish to measure other outcomes that are specific to your programme. For example, if your programme is aimed at improving numeracy and literacy (amongst other outcomes), you may wish to measure improvements in this area.

It's likely that data on the factors outlined above are already being collected, therefore you should think about how this could be analysed to provide further insight into your programme

Review the data already being collected and what further data could be collected and analysed for evaluation purposes.
Tracking the long-term outcomes of young people can provide further insight into the effectiveness of your pre-apprenticeship programme. For example, if young people have remained in the apprenticeship after one year, or if young people have progressed to a new role after completing the apprenticeship. Tracking the long-term outcomes of young people can be completed in a variety of ways. For example, through follow up telephone calls or follow up surveys by e-mail or post.

Evaluating your programme

Assessing cost-effectiveness

To fully demonstrate the value of your programme to potential funders and commissioners, it is a good idea to assess the cost-effectiveness of the pre-apprenticeship programme.

To do this, you need to decide which outcomes you will use to measure cost effectiveness. It needs to be something you can measure accurately, such as the data collected as monitoring information. For example, the number of young people who progress to an apprenticeship.

You also need to work out the cost of designing and delivering all activities on the pre-apprenticeship. Make sure you consider every cost associated with the programme, including the cost of the time that staff spend organising and implementing it. Other costs might include: overheads (rent and utility bills), payments to partners, or incentive payments to young people, (if applicable).

To calculate the cost-effectiveness of the programme, you need to divide the total costs of the programme by the outcomes. In this example, that means dividing the total cost of the programme, by the total number of young people who progress to an apprenticeship.

This is an outline of how to do a very basis cost effectiveness analysis of your programme. The following link provides further information on conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis.

Counterfactual – what if?

One of the tasks involved in understanding the impact of your programme, is to compare outcomes for young people, to those you would expect if the pre-apprenticeship had not been implemented - this is known as the 'counterfactual'.

The 'counterfactual' measures what would have happened to young people in the absence of the pre-apprenticeship programme. This is estimated by comparing counterfactual outcomes to those outcomes achieved by young people on the pre-apprenticeship.

This could involve using baseline monitoring information (collected at the beginning of the programme) as an estimate of the counterfactual, where it is reasonable to assume this would have remained the same without the programme.

Another possibility is to compare outcomes for young people on the pre-apprenticeship programme to other young people who did not participate. However, those who participated in the programme may have different characteristics from those who did not, so their outcomes may be due to the other characteristics and not the programme itself.

Evaluating your programme

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are among the most common ways of collecting evidence. They can be filled in by those responding in their own time or filled in during a question and answer session with the evaluator. They are useful for answering 'how' and 'what' questions, such as 'how many people are involved in this activity?' and 'what have you found most useful about this pre-apprenticeship programme?'

Interviews (face-to-face or telephone)

Interviews can be carried out with individuals or with a small group. They are a good way of asking 'why' questions and gathering young people's views on the pre-apprenticeship programme.

The success of telephone interviews depends on people having access to a telephone, the

knowledge and confidence to use it and the necessary communication skills. Telephone interviews are generally more cost-effective than face-to-face interviews. However, it's hard to read the body language of someone at the other end of a phone. It can be harder to establish a good rapport, unless you already know the person well.

Focus Groups

Focus groups can be used as a reflection session at the end of a particular part of the pre-apprenticeship. Focus groups (of around 8-10 people) or smaller, buzz sessions (maximum 6 people) can help you gather several young people's views about the programme. Choose a comfortable place to meet that is easily accessible. This will encourage people to come. You will need some carefully prepared questions for group members to think about and group facilitators (ideally two) who can ask these.

Feedback Forums

Feedback forums can be conducted online and are accessible for young people. These are a way of involving young people in regular discussions about their experiences. They can also be used to generate ideas and to produce recommendations about future provision.

Evaluating your programme

## Pre- and post-activity measures of skills and competencies

Many providers ask young people about changes in their skills and confidence at the end of activities, but the most robust way of capturing this is by measuring young people's confidence, soft skills and technical skills prior to and following their involvement in the pre-apprenticeship. In this way, you will be able to see the direct impact of the activities. Ways of measuring young people's skills include soft skills and learning styles questionnaires, work readiness assessments and personality profiling, which can be run by tutors or completed independently by young people (e.g. a short survey which asks young people to rate their confidence/skills on a scale of 1 to10). It is important that young people undertake the same assessment at the beginning and end of activities, to show their distance travelled. These assessments can be built into preparation and reflection sessions.

Monitoring and evaluation can also be used to ensure the pre-apprenticeship programme is supporting young people to develop the appropriate skills and competencies required to enter the labour market. Programmes which do not support the development of useful skills risk becoming stigmatising for participants rather than a pathway to apprenticeships and good jobs. Pre-and post- assessments (linked to an effective initial assessment of young people) can be a useful way of assessing if programmes are developing the skills and competencies in young people, that they set out to deliver.

Example evaluation tool

The Outcomes Star is a common tool used to measure a range of soft skills. Not only can it help to identify areas in which young people need to focus on in order to progress, e.g. by improving specific skills, it can be used as an evaluation tool. Completing the outcomes star before, during and after a young person's time on the pre-apprenticeship will allow you to measure whether the programme is enabling young people to develop the intended skills and competencies.
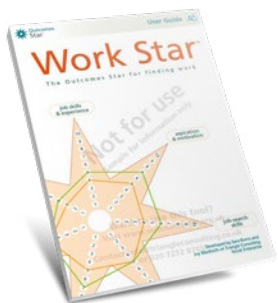
CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

E2C73 take a thorough approach to continuous feedback and assessment. The first induction interview includes an assessment which measures each young person's level of basic skills e.g. numeracy, as well as competencies related to personal and social development. The assessment is completed by the young person, alongside their tutor, using a paper-based assessment form and is repeated throughout a young person's time on the programme to track their progress.

TOP TIP

You can maximise effectiveness by linking the initial assessment of young people to ongoing programme monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluating your programme

Key considerations and ethical issues

Regardless of the methods you choose for your evaluation, you should always follow ethical guidelines to respect and protect the rights and wellbeing of the young people involved.

Young people should always be given information about the purposes of the evaluation activity and asked whether they want to take part. It is good practice to explain the activity, and to give young people a fair chance to decide whether they would like to participate. You should explain that:

- The data will be kept confidential, as with all confidentiality agreements, it will only be broken if the young person appears to be in danger of harming themselves or others.

- If the data is shared with anyone, it will be made anonymous. That means that their name and any other identifying details will be removed. Unless they consent otherwise.

- The evaluation activity is not an assessment of them, or their progress on the programme. Rather, the information is being used for research purposes, to help assess the pre-apprenticeship and demonstrate the value of the programme.

Useful links to ethical guidelines

The following links contain useful guidance on important ethical issues to consider when conducting research, including gaining informed consent from young people, as well as data protection guidelines.

Good practice guidance for gaining informed consent
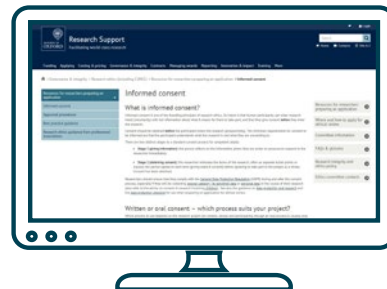
Key considerations for ensuring informed consent when working with people on research or evaluation projects

Social Research Association – ethical guidelines

Practical advice and guidance on research ethics to assist in planning your evaluation

Data protection guidelines for training providers

These resources offer schools and colleges advice and guidance on personal data to use alongside their own data protection policy.

Evaluating your programme

Technological University Dublin, *Ireland*

TU Dublin commissioned an external evaluation of the Access to Apprenticeship pilot programme after the first phase to learn more about the strengths, challenges and key learning points to take forward. TU Dublin have been able to use this evaluation to inform the future development of the programme. For example, in the next rollout of Access to Apprenticeship, TU Dublin are considering adapting the 'taster' modules to provide young people with a deeper level of insight and understanding into key sectors.

This evaluation also provided the opportunity to gauge a wider range of stakeholders' views about the programme, including those of participating employers, tutors and young people.

3. Choosing an external evaluation

You may decide to commission an independent external evaluation of your programme.

External evaluation can be particularly useful during the early stages of the programme, or if there have been significant changes to its design or delivery, of if it has been a long time since the programme was evaluated. Doing so helps to identify key learning points, areas for improvement and development, and provide a solid evidence base in supporting applications for funding as well as engaging external partners.

External evaluation can help you to explore your contribution to observed outcomes and impacts, such as through focus groups, group workshops and/or interviews with a range of internal and external stakeholders (e.g. from your local community, local council, media, government etc).

If you decide to appoint an external evaluator, you will need to draw up an evaluation tender. This usually includes:

- Overview of the aims of and intended outcomes of your pre-apprenticeship

- The aims and objectives of the evaluation

- The time scale for the evaluation

- Evaluation milestones

- Information about the approach and methodology you would like

- A request for specific information about the evaluation team

Having put the evaluation out to tender, it's a good idea to invite shortlisted applicants to discuss the evaluation process with the project co-ordinator and some members of the project team or management committee. This allows for useful discussion about the evaluation process, how it will happen, and what will be done. It will also give you some idea about whether the evaluator will work well with members of the project team and have a good understanding of the issues and background to your pre-apprenticeship.

Evaluating your programme

4. Using the evidence

Evaluation is only valuable if the information gathered is used to refine and improve the pre-apprenticeship programme. The results of monitoring and evaluation should always be fed back into the planning cycle and the appropriate modifications made to the programme.

For example, if monitoring information reveals a significant increase in the number of young people leaving the programme early, or failing to progress to an apprenticeship, this should lead to further investigation.

Modifications can be as simple as making small changes to the programme based on feedback from young people or employers, such as adding or changing workshop content.

Responding to feedback from employers is another example. Employers engaged in the programme might feedback that local labour market needs are changing, meaning pre-apprenticeship programmes need to develop in line with these changes.

Additionally, learning from monitoring and evaluation can be useful to external stakeholders, to draw out lessons for other providers; and in some cases, influence policy, especially where national pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship systems are being developed.

Evaluating your programme

5. Dissemination and promotion

Letting people know about the work you are doing is important for three main reasons:

- It helps to spread the word locally and can lead to more and different people wanting to get involved in the pre-apprenticeship

- It communicates a sense of energy and action. It communicates a sense of energy and action and the feeling that something good is happening which is important in building a culture of optimism and participation.

- It helps to keep different organisations and funders on board and encourages them to deploy their resources to pre-apprenticeships

CASE STUDY

E2C73, *France*

The voices of young people are a central feature of the marketing and messaging used to advertise E2C73.This includes case studies of young people who have found an apprenticeship or employment through local radio, online and using social media. These help to create a positive message about E2C73 and the young people who attend, which in turn is key to improving perceptions of the target group amongst local employers and other partners in the local community.

You may want to use quotes from your evaluation in promotional literature as well as short case studies and photographs. You may choose to give presentations about your work to local bodies or at workshops and conferences. It's a good idea to always include participants who can speak with conviction and authority about their experiences in such activities.

Apart from project stakeholders and members of the wider community, there are other audiences who should hear about your work:

- Cultivate the local press: send them press releases, photographs and 'good news' stories

- Produce briefings and updates for local politicians, key providers and funding bodies

- Make sure the work is known about by the local council, regional government offices and your local politicians and representatives

Make sure that in any communications to politicians, funders and the press, you include:

- Testimonies from young people and employers involved

- Photographs showing activity and engagement

- Examples of the impact the work is having

- Evidence of the wider benefits of the work you are doing locally - and if relevant – nationally

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
The target group and their needs are clearly defined and informs the design and delivery of the programme.					
The programme is designed to respond to local employment and skills					
You work with employers on the design of your programme to ensure that it is tailored to meet the needs of the labour market					
You have considered working with relevant partners in programme design					
There is a clear rationale for the size, length and intensity of your programme to ensure it meets the needs of the target group					
You work to a clear quality assurance framework to enable you to systematically review the quality and effectiveness of your programme					
A sustainable funding arrangement is in place for designing, delivering and sustaining your pre-apprenticeship programme.					
All aspects of programme design is considered when evaluating your pre-apprenticeship					

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
Employers are involved in designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships at an early stage.					
Employer engagement activities are considered throughout the design and delivery of your pre-apprenticeship programme.					
When engaging with new employers, you consider which sector and employer size is best for your programme.					
You engage with new employers in a variety of ways e.g. Chambers of Commerce, by word of mouth, by advertising.					
The messaging you use to engage employers is carefully planned and tailored to your local context.					
You consult with employers to gain an understanding of their hiring needs, skills gaps, and competencies required for specific occupations.					
When engaging with employers, information about their needs is gathered using a variety of methods					
There is a single point of contact for employers to ensure they have a clear link with your organisation.					
Evaluation is embedded throughout your employer engagement activities to enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes of your activities					

3. Developing strong partnerships
Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
A wide range of partnerships are in place to provide comprehensive and holistic support on the programme					
You have identified which partners you currently work with and their contribution to the design or delivery of the programme					
You have thought about if there are gaps in the pre-apprenticeship, such as activity or content, that could be filled by a partner and would benefit young people's progression through the programme.					
Marketing activities for partners are varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences.					
The benefits to prospective partners are tailored in your messaging to the specific organisation.					
Partnerships are continuously evaluated to identify what is working well and what needs improvement.					
You evaluate the degree to which your partners successfully meet the needs of your pre-apprentices.					

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
Messaging clearly outlines the benefits of the programme					
Diverse marketing approaches and a combination of activities are used					
A range of recruitment activities are in place to directly engage with young people					
Referral agencies are aware of the programme and target groups					
Initial assessment activity is undertaken, using IT where appropriate, prior to programme entry					
Initial assessment includes both qualitative and basic skills assessment					
Data from initial assessment is used to match young people and employers					

Self-assessment and planning tool

The RAG system is a way of rating performance based on the Red, Amber and Green colours used in a traffic light system. This tool will enable you to quickly identify which areas of your programme are working well, where you need to make changes and to plan and monitor programme improvements

Effective practice success factor	RAG Assessment	Actions to improve	By whom	Review date	RAG Assessment
The pre-apprenticeship contains activities which focus on developing young people's soft skills and employability skills					
Programme activities are sequenced in a way which allows young people to gradually build skills, confidence and knowledge in preparation for work experiences					
Basic skills are delivered in flexible and creative ways to make learning engaging and relevant to young people's lives and employment goals.					
The pre-apprenticeship includes good quality, personalised support for young people, such as mentoring or Information and Guidance provision					
Young people are carefully matched with work experience opportunities, taking in to consideration individual skills, interests and career goals.					
The focus is on securing work experience with employers who are committed to having a real apprenticeship or job vacancy at the end of the placement.					
Employers who take young people for work experience are supported to have a clear set of tasks and/or a work plan for the work experience placement.					
The work experience plan is be developed by the you, the employer, and young people					
Young people on work experience are given as much insight into the world of work as possible.					
Work experiences are well monitored so that both the young person and the employer benefit from the experience					
Delivering work experience includes giving young people the opportunity to reflect on and learn from their experiences					
Young people's achievements on work experience are formally recognised, e.g. certificates of completion					
The delivery model is flexible so that it can address the individual needs of participants					
Feedback form employers and young people are continually used develop the content of a programme					

LEARNING AND **WORK** INSTITUTE

J.P.Morgan

Learning & Work Institute
4th floor, Arnhem House,
31 Waterloo Way,
Leicester, LE1 6LP

📞 +44 (0)116 204 4200

✉ enquiries@learningandwork.org.uk

🌐 www.learningandwork.org.uk

🐦 @LearnWorkUK