

## In house delivery of Functional Skills at Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital

### 1. Why did you choose to bring functional skills delivery in-house?

The Trust's Vocational Centre had around 120 learners at any one point and we delivered about a 60 / 40 split of non-clinical and clinical apprenticeships from level 2 through to level 4. We had direct claims status for over half of our qualifications delivered and sat within the Widening Participation Team, in the Education and Learning Department of the Trust. Previously a local college had been brought in to deliver functional skills at a cost to the Trust of circa 6K per year (we ran weekly sessions in blocks of 12 weeks).

The quality of delivery was patchy in terms of the resources used, teaching, the inconsistency of staff (so it was difficult for learners to build a rapport and relationship to foster learning when we had different staff from week to week), inexperience of staff of teaching mature learners and the lack of awareness of workplace challenges (such as the emotional side of working in a hospital / unsociable hours impacting on attendance, motivation and concentration) and the college prioritising their own needs above ours – this had led to sessions occasionally being cancelled as staff were pulled back to the college for cover purposes.

A Business Case was developed to demonstrate:

- the income generated from the inhouse delivery of apprenticeships could cover increase in cost
- the cost of the current delivery of FS
- the cost of an alternative method of delivery
- the value added through having a Trust based / employed FS tutor

Our proposal was to recruit a part time functional skills tutor who would be employed by the Trust with the view that if a tutor was based within the Trust they could offer both a set programme of FS course, both literacy / numeracy and L1 and L2 but also tailored sessions / programmes for those staff (predominately clinical) who might not be able to make the set programmes or who really struggled with content or confidence issues. We also wanted to focus more holistically on CPD for staff at Bands 1-4 so the in-house role would allow us to open up FS programmes to the wider workforce, including those staff members not on apprenticeships.

At the same time we also advertised for a part time B&A assessor and offered both roles as either separate standalone roles or the offer of combining the two elements in one role to form a full time position (both were AfC B5).

We were successful in recruiting a full time B5 member of staff whose role was split between functional skills delivery / development and business and admin assessing. The positive outcomes from this model were:

- The ability to tailor both the content and the delivery style for our learners.
- The time to offer 1-on-1 support for those learners that needed it (those with confidence issues, who had been out of education for a long time, or taken exams and not passed).
- The time to develop new resources, research online support / sources and offer a range of session for learners – intensive, more distance based learning and small group learning as well as traditional sessions.
- We were also able to offer FS sessions / programmes out to the wider workforce.
- Being responsive to learners that would regularly just ‘pop in’ for additional support, resources, questions or with worries about their FS.
- The time and space to develop positive relationships with learners which enhanced learning.

## 2. How did you make the case to senior management?

Key ingredients for success were:

- Linking the role to wider WP agenda
- Articulating that whilst there would be increase in cost, the income from the apprenticeship delivery would cover this so no financial impact on the Trust
- Communicating positive outcomes from the new role
- Ensuring that the decision makers were aware of how crucial FS were to the completion of apprenticeships, staff development and career progression

## 3. What were the main challenges in setting up your in-house delivery and how did you overcome them?

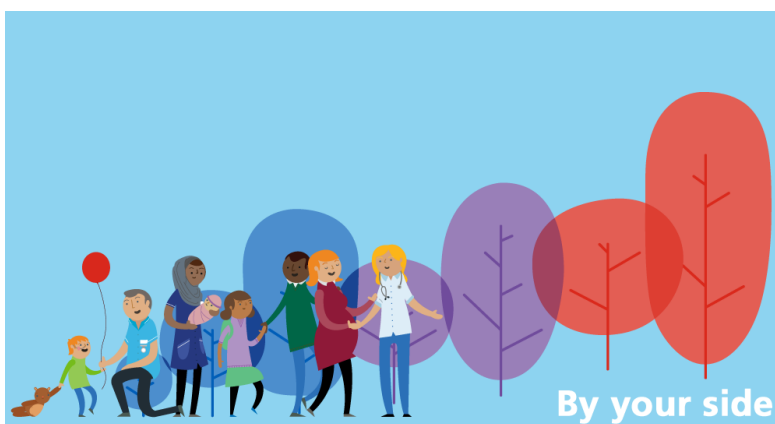
- Pitching the Business Case at the right level for decision makers / SMT
- Managing the transition of learners from the old to the new delivery
- Recruiting the right person in role (being prepared not to recruit)
- Getting the JD /SP right
- Once in post, supporting the person in role to get the right balance between the two key responsibility areas
- Thinking about what you really need and how you will position your FS delivery (so we front-loaded maths and did literacy in the second half of the apprenticeship). We staggered the delivery to try and reduce pressure on staff. We had one part-time (18 hours) member of staff delivering literacy, numeracy and ICT for all of our learners

#### 4. What were/are the main challenges now that the programme is running and how did/do you address them?

- Balancing the split role (managed through supervision/ line management – managing the allocation of work and learners)
- Managing learners in terms of confidence, openness to FS – mostly numeracy. (Again, through line management support, team meetings sharing ideas, encouraging staff to network and work with staff from other teams / Trusts to share and learn)
- Managing managers – so advocating on behalf of learners when shifts were changed or staff were not always released. (Staff being aware of their roles, management support, learning contracts and managers involvement in this)
- Exit strategies – supporting learners who were very dependent on tutors to working more independently
- Finding appropriate good quality resources

#### 5. What advice would you give to an employer wishing to set up their own in-house functional skills learning?

- Make sure it is financially viable
- Get SMT / decision makers on board before you submit your Business Case
- Make sure you know your learners' needs to match them to a well written job description and job specification
- Make sure there is support in place for FS tutors / staff (as they may be the only person in that role in their organisation), so think about where they are positioned within the organisation, providing support possibly outside of the organisation
- Be prepared to continue to support CPD of staff



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