



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BECOMING AN EMPLOYER-PROVIDER

KAREN GREEN, QUALITY DIRECTOR AT LIFETIME TRAINING

MAY 2017

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BECOMING AN EMPLOYER-PROVIDER

BY KAREN GREEN, QUALITY DIRECTOR AT LIFETIME TRAINING

With the apprenticeship reforms now well underway it's time that employers consider their options. Do you bring training in-house or outsource to experts?

There are many reasons why employers may be choosing to apply for employer-provider status, whereby the employer delivers apprenticeship training directly to their employees, rather than outsourcing to an external training provider:

- Maintain control
- Potentially lower costs
- Train within your business' culture and ethos
- More 16-18 incentive payments (employer-providers are entitled to receive both the employer and provider payments)

While on the surface of it this all sounds straight forwards, the new rules and regulations that govern apprenticeships as part of the apprenticeship reforms offer some food for thought.

THE (NOT SO) SMALL PRINT

To become an employer-provider, employers must apply to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to be included on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP). This will include due diligence checks on your organisation and directors, financial checks and an assessment of your organisation's capability to deliver high quality apprenticeship training.

The new register will open four times a year for new applications. Providers are expected to reapply every 12 months if they want to maintain their registration.

Upon registration, it is important that employer-providers are well versed in their responsibilities to learners. From a delivery perspective for example, apprenticeships are required to last a minimum of 12 months and comprise at least 20% off-the-job training (learning that takes place outside of an apprentice's normal day-to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of their apprenticeship). Employer-providers will be responsible for designing and delivering their own 'off-the-job' apprentice training, which the government has stipulated as at least 20% of an apprentice's time as part of the reforms to ensure a quality learning experience. While this is an excellent opportunity for employers the guidance around 20% off-the-job training remains rather convoluted. The key takeaway however is that delivery will require robust evidence gathering and reporting procedures.

In addition, English and maths are high on the agenda in developing learners' skills for employability, progress and promotion.



Regardless of the level of apprenticeship undertaken apprentices will now be expected to make reasonable progress towards achieving a Level 2 (equivalent to a GCSE at Grade C or above in the old system or Grades 9-4 in the new) in these subjects. For example, those apprentices who have achieved their Level 1 will be expected to work towards their Level 2, though not necessarily pass it before entering the gateway to end-point assessment (EPA). This is all well and good for people with an academic leaning. But what do employers do with those apprentices who didn't take the academic route for a reason?

It is all too easy to underestimate the leap required to get someone from, for arguments sake say, a Grade D to a Grade C, especially if the drive isn't there to achieve it or social and learning needs demand extra tuition and time.

COMPLIANCE

ESFA. Ofsted. TAS. What structures will you need to put in place?

And then there's the small matter of regulation. Apprenticeship training delivery will be closely monitored by education watchdog Ofsted. Ofsted will conduct graded inspection visits with just two days' notice for any training provider. In fact, Paul Joyce, Ofsted's Deputy Director, Further Education and Skills, has reiterated that new employer-providers will be inspected within three years and Ofsted may carry out monitoring or support and challenge visits prior to a full inspection to assess risk. It is understandable that employers planning to register themselves as providers will be goal-setting as part of their overarching people strategies. Building Ofsted results into these plans will benefit from a longer-term view as it is less common that providers with 2000 plus learners achieve Grade I status. Experience of the process and allowing time for the apprenticeship programme to be embedded are critical to success.

When it comes to funding, providers have a social and contractual responsibility to ensure that any taxpayers' money is being used effectively – for example when levy funds have been depleted and government contributes 90% of total training funds for any additional apprenticeships – and is compliant with government regulations. The ESFA will regulate all funded apprenticeships and ensure all apprentices are eligible for funding.

Becoming a provider should only be considered if a company is confident that they can provide quality training that is fully compliant. Negative outcomes of an apprenticeship programme, that are then published in the public domain, could have a significant impact on brand reputation.

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

While there are clear advantages in attaining employer-provider status, these benefits are not exclusive to employer-providers. Companies have the option to provide some of the training themselves without employer-provider classification. There is a £100k limit for any training that the employer undertakes. Employers are expected to appoint an external training provider to act as the main provider for engagement with the ESFA.

If employers estimate that they will deliver more than £100k of apprenticeship training, they must apply to be an employer-provider and be recognised as such on the RoATP. The employer-provider can then choose to deliver part or all the apprenticeship training to their own team members as either a sub-contractor to a main provider or as the main provider.

Alternatively, employers can register as a training provider through the main provider route, in the same way as independent training providers and colleges apply to be registered. This means that the employer can deliver as a training provider to their own employees and those of other employers.

There is no doubt that there is an awful lot involved in creating a successful apprenticeship programme, so is becoming an employer-provider the right course to take? Now's the time to really take stock and decide on what's best for your business.

TRAINING

Will your managers need additional training to effectively train apprentices?



HOW THINGS ARE CHANGING: FROM FRAMEWORKS TO STANDARDS

The current apprenticeship frameworks are made up of a series of Ofqual regulated qualifications. These qualifications are mostly achieved by ongoing assessment, judging the capability of an apprentice to complete a task at a given time. These qualifications tend to be delivered and assessed by external training professionals with limited requirement for employers to be involved in the training of an apprentice. It is possible for an apprentice to achieve through formative assessments or ongoing assessment.

The new employer designed standards have been built on the principle of how an apprentice can gather and retain skills and knowledge, and ultimately demonstrate this through the completion of a rigorous series of assessments which take place at the end of their learning programme.

This end-point assessment (EPA) is conducted by professionals external to the organisation that delivered training to the apprentice, adding further rigour and perceived quality to the apprenticeship qualification. The standards offer less assessment of skills but more opportunity to train an apprentice to the standards of the organisation. The attainment of English and maths functional skills qualifications, if not previously attained or an equivalent thereof, remain a requirement in both frameworks and standards.

HOW LIFETIME CAN HELP

Lifetime is the UK's largest apprenticeship training provider and, alongside its commercial training courses, 400+ qualified trainers and tutors deliver training to more than 20,000 learners a year. Founded in 1995, Lifetime's team has over 21 years' experience delivering best-in-class, bespoke training courses at both a local and national level across retail and business administration, care, hospitality, and fitness and active leisure sectors.

To support the delivery of apprenticeship programmes, and employer drives for new recruits, Lifetime offers a free apprentice recruitment service, tailored to the exact needs of the employer. Lifetime's recruitment specialists will advertise, source, screen and present apprentice candidates using a selection of the best regional and national jobs boards.

GOVERNANCE

Who will challenge your ways of working and the success of your apprenticeship programme?



To meet the requirements of the new standards, Lifetime trainers will:

- Ⓧ Train, coach and mentor apprentices to increase their work skills.
- Ⓧ Help apprentices 'learn to learn' through a series of tasks designed to ensure they will be end-point ready.
- Ⓧ Be on-site regularly to ensure apprentices have the best training experience available.

Lifetime is committed to delivering the highest quality provision of English and maths and has invested in creating a specialist functional skills team that work in tandem with trainers.

Lifetime is a technologically advanced learning and development institution, deploying award-winning education and learning technology to enhance the employer and learner experience.

Lifetime has invested significantly in market-leading learner management and e-learning solutions. This allows for precise, detailed and timely recording and reporting of many metrics including the progression of learners through their programmes.

As part of Lifetime's quality improvement strategy, apprentices are surveyed at 13, 26, and 39 weeks. Although Ofsted is not prescriptive about how teaching and learning are delivered (provided that learners make at least expected progress), Lifetime supports its trainers to continue their professional development in their area of expertise and ensures they are trained to, at a minimum, the EAT Level 3 even though there is no regulatory requirement to do so. A dedicated team of 15 compliance auditors monitor learner records, funds and data submissions to ensure a low risk, high quality training provider status is maintained. Being subject to audit and financial inspections means Lifetime's records are 100% accurate, accessible and frequently stored for periods in excess of seven years.

Lifetime is committed to ensuring employers receive the best possible service. If you are interested in becoming an employer-provider, please call **0333 222 0782** or email the team levy@lifetimetraining.co.uk.

THE EMPLOYER-PROVIDER CHECKLIST

Planning on applying for employer-provider status?
Use our handy checklist to ensure you've got everything covered.

- RoATP registered
- Curriculum plan
- Learning materials
- Process for documenting learning
- Trainers (or managers upskilled to train apprentices)
- Specialist English & maths tutors
- Compliance policies and procedures
 - Quality assurance
 - Funding assurance
- Approved English Apprenticeships compliance
- ESFA compliance
- Ofsted compliance including:
 - Safeguarding
 - Prevent duty
 - Equality & Diversity
- Health & Safety
- Recruitment process
- Nominations process
- End-point assessment process
- Digital TAS account management



SUCCESS

What will success look like?
How will you track and measure programme effectiveness?

