

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: TOOLKIT GUIDE

Project Title – Exploring barriers to apprenticeship study

Organisations/Partnership Names: University of Portsmouth (UoP), Hampshire County Council (HCC), Defence Science & Technology Laboratory (DSTL)



Hampshire
County Council



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Toolkit Guide

This collaborative project aimed to explore the lived experiences of apprentices who have or were at risk from withdrawing from their studies, by collaboratively working with established employers who have Degree Apprenticeships across all levels (HEF 4-6). The project purpose was to identify better processes and interventions to assist in preventing at risk apprentices from withdrawing from their studies. The main outcome of this project was the development of an evidenced-based best practice framework resource, which originated from interviews with apprentices. The outputs from this project are designed to positively influence apprentice engagement and completion rates, whilst also acting as a template for other Education Providers to support their apprentice retention rates.

Each of the toolkit elements are listed below:

- 1) **Interview process (*future research*)** - this is a 'how to' guide designed to support the qualitative data gathering process for this study. By providing step-by-step guidance as to how to undertake a project of this type, it is hoped that this study can be replicated, allowing the evidence-base on this topic area to be further developed.
 - a) **Semi-structured interview questions framework** - this document provides a list of semi-structured questions, which were asked as part of the interview process to a range of apprentices. The purpose of the framework is to support any future studies of this type in broadly aligning with this project. If similar questions are posed to apprentices in the future, this would result in the expansion of the evidence base in this important topic area.
- 2) **Key questions checklist (*core tool for education providers*)** – this resource provides an evidenced-based resources for education providers to consider when apprentices commence a Break in Learning. The checklist combines the key themes from this research project, alongside relevant questions that education providers should consider alongside broader considerations to support and manage a positive return to study following the Break in Learning.
- 3) **Apprentice Journey Log (AJL) (*core tool for education providers*)** - this has been developed to enhance engagement and support for apprentices across stakeholders. At the University of Portsmouth, the AJL has been adopted by the central Degree Apprenticeship Office (DAO), and is being utilised by work-based tutors, apprentices, and employers. The AJL is an evidence-based log, derived from a thematic analysis of apprentice and employer interviews, and aims to reduce apprentice withdrawals, particularly for those on Breaks in Learning or apprentices joining/rejoining established cohorts. The Apprentice Journey log is designed for ease of use, and embedded within it are a series of hyperlinked instructions to aid accessibility. The Apprentice Journey Log (AJL) can easily be adapted for use by other education providers, and the collaborative project team would welcome the opportunity to work with other education providers to develop the AJL to meet their bespoke system requirements, alongside supporting staff training and subsequent evaluation of the impact of these changes. The AJL resources consist of the following elements:
 - a) **AJL blank** – this is a template which can be used and adapted by education

providers for their own internal purposes to support the Break in Learning processes within their own educational environment

- b) **AJL example** – this provides an example of how the AJL can be used to support apprentices returning from a Break in Learning
 - c) **CPD video** – this provides an overview to the hyperlinked resource within the AJL that offers CPD training for academics, which directly links to a previously [AWD funded project](#) (Developing CPD for Academic Teams to Enhance the Apprentice Experience). The CPD project resulted in the development of an accessible online resource to help academics and professional staff to better understand apprenticeship requirements and compliance frameworks (by providing a centralised platform for information and guidance). As the CPD project is hosted in a Virtual Learning Environment, an embedded hyperlink allows for asynchronous learning to become part of the support element embedded within the AJL.
 - d) **AJL instructions** - this provides guidance as to how to complete each of the three sections (stage 1, 2 & 3) in the AJL (each stage is fully overviewed in the AJL, Project overview and project report). The decision to remove the content into a separate document came directly from employer feedback during the pilot phase of the project and the subsequent revision aims to keep the AJL itself as streamlined as possible.
 - e) **AJL SiT questions** - this is a series of questions designed to assist education providers by supporting the Staying-in-Touch conversation element of the AJL.
- 4) **Apprentice Vignettes** - these supplementary resources contain anonymised vignettes showcasing apprentices' lived experiences, highlighting key challenges without revealing any personal details. These vignettes exemplify the evidence-based themes identified in the project and support the approaches taken to support apprentices deemed to be 'at risk' and are designed to be discussion points which can be used in staff development activities.
- a) **Vignette guide** – this resource provides an 'how to' guide for researchers and education providers to plan and produced an anonymised vignette to highlight the lived experiences of an apprentice
- 5) **Staff development slide deck** – this slide deck is designed to facilitate the roll-out of the toolkit. The presentation emphasises both the thematic findings and practical elements of the project, alongside encouraging attendees to explore apprentice support needs and align them with their professional practices and to consider how internal practices influence this.
- a) **Session plan** – the session plan resource aligns with the associated staff development slide deck and outlines in detail how the staff training slide deck can be facilitated.

Moving forwards, the project team would welcome future collaboration with other education providers to further develop and evaluate these resources.

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The table below identifies the relationship between the key resources and the relevant stakeholders. Please see the Collaborative Project Final Report for further information.

Stakeholder	Relevant resource(s)
Staff development team	Apprentice Journey Log & associated resources Apprentice vignettes Staff development slide deck & session plan
Academic staff	Key questions checklist Apprentice Journey Log & associated resources (including Academic CPD) Apprentice Vignettes AJL Staying in Touch (SiT) questions Key questions checklist
Apprentices	Apprentice Journey Log
Employers	Apprentice Journey Log & associated resources Apprentice vignettes
Central service staff and/or Work Based Tutors	Apprentice Journey Log & associated resources Apprentice vignettes AJL Staying in Touch (SiT) questions Key questions checklist
Researchers	Interview process Semi-structured interview questions framework Apprentice vignettes

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