

Interim findings on Apprenticeships

TRAILBLAZERS



The Apprenticeship Trailblazers aim to achieve greater employer ownership of Apprenticeship training, as recommended by the Richard Review. Trailblazers are networks of employers and other sector and industry bodies, working together to design apprenticeship training and standards for jobs in their sector.

IES was commissioned to lead an evaluation of the early Trailblazers. A report published this week by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills revealed the interim findings.

Positives

Employers are enthusiastic to be at the heart of developments

Clear definitions of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers need

Employers have delivered a template for future developments

BIS is learning about the structures needed to support the reforms

Challenges

Resource-intensive, which makes it hard for SMEs to get involved

It will take time for the benefits (and any drawbacks) to be shown

Potential for confusion and overlaps between the standards and qualifications

Lessons learned lead to structures being imposed that undermine employers' ownership

Tips for success

Get genuine employer engagement

Having an intermediary or facilitator can be effective, as long as employers ensure they act as an 'honest broker'

Find the right approach for each occupation and sector

Some have welcomed the opportunity to work from first principles

Some advised not to 'throw the baby out with the bath water'

Questions to identify the extent of change required:

Does the existing framework meet the industry's needs?

Why/why not?

How well does the existing framework work for the industry?

In what way does it meet needs or not?

What, if anything, is worth keeping/what must be changed?

Build consensus on the standard within the Trailblazer group, and among employers in the wider sector

Does the standard describe the job in the employer's organisation?

If not, how does the job differ from the description to start to identify the changes required?

Will the standard have a credible reputation in the industry?

If not, what elements should be changed?

What makes an effective Trailblazer group?

Passion and interest in developing skills for the wider industry



Focus on a high-quality training experience for apprentices



Consider this

Size and structure

Very large groups (25+ individuals) can be unwieldy and take a longer time to reach decisions.

Form action or working subgroups reporting back to main group.



The right expertise around the table

Include those with training or assessment expertise.

Draw in that expertise through engagement with training or assessment organisations or earlier Trailblazers.

Managing administration and delivery

A resource-intensive process.

Appoint a facilitator to lead the administrative side and reduce the burden.

Each network to agree structures that work for their context.

Where a facilitator is appointed, employers within the Trailblazer network should monitor their role.



Timing of contributions and the right point to bring in expertise

Professional Bodies, Awarding Organisations, Sector Skills Councils, and National Skills Academies can supply bodies of expertise to speed developments.

Consider whether to:

Take
advantage of
that expertise
early on

or

Wait until
decisions
are made around
the apprenticeship
architecture

Experiences suggest that this decision may be informed by the expertise that employers themselves bring to the table.