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WORK-BASED LEARNING AN OVERVIEW BRIEFING

Introduction

Enabling a culture of work-based learning can bring a wealth of benefits for individuals, patients, teams and employers.

For employers it can bring additional recruitment pipelines and develop the existing and future workforce. As learning is facilitated in the workplace, individuals will further understand what your organisation does and how you work, while developing technical skills, and understanding the behaviours and values needed.

In this briefing, we explore what work-based learning is, and what a good work-based learning culture looks like.

What is work-based learning?

There are a few different approaches to work-based learning. It may be that as an employer you work alongside schools, colleges and universities to provide new learning opportunities for students in the workplace. Some learners, such as apprentices, may be employees, whose programme of study is embedded into the workplace, and is designed to meet the skills and values needed by the organisation. For others it's the opportunity to continue learning and developing within the work environment because the culture and environment allows them to gain new skills in the workplace relevant for their role.

Examples of work-based learning programmes include apprenticeships, T Levels, and pre-employment programmes.

How can work-based learning be successfully enabled in my organisation?

Organisations need to have a culture and approach to work-based learning embedded as part of what they do.

We suggest five key principles to underpin a culture of work-based learning in the workplace. These key principles are leadership, manager buy-in and understanding, workforce strategy and planning, infrastructure, and relationships with education providers.

These five key principles can support you with work-based learning programmes you already have in place, or plan to implement in the future.

West Midlands Ambulance Service has a long-held work-based learning approach, which meant a shift towards apprenticeship training delivery was not a large shift in organisational culture.

Depending on the work-based learning programme you may need to adjust how much time you invest in building each of the underpinning principles, for example some organisations may need to spend more time focusing on infrastructure to support scale up, while others will need to spend more time on relationships with training providers for successful implementation. Use our [work-based learning infographic](#) to support with conversations around the five key principles.

Leadership

Creating a forward-focused, collective leadership team, which champions a good culture and environment for work-based learning can ensure that it is successfully embedded across organisations and works in a way that is meaningful and impactful for learners, teams and patients.

An executive sponsor who takes ownership of raising the profile of sustainable work-based learning can also be beneficial as they would be well placed to have ongoing discussions with the board about current and new approaches and how these align to national policy and funding.

Leaders are also well placed in supporting line managers through conversations and training to understand the benefits and good practice needed to enable work-based learning.

Trusts such as Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust have clear and visible leadership on apprenticeships within their organisation, with board-level support for an increase in apprenticeships offers and a commitment to offering apprenticeships across all levels of the workforce.

Manager buy-in and understanding

Managers and staff will regularly come into contact with work-based learners. They will have a significant influence on employee attitudes and behaviours. For managers and staff to support work-based learning, they must understand the role they play to make it successful.

Conversations and training sessions can support with raising awareness of the benefits and options available to train in the workplace, and support managers and staff to understand their responsibility to identify and facilitate regular opportunities for learners.

Building understanding and commitment to providing work-based learning in

teams is a central part of the line manager's role. It is a way of supporting staff to feel valued, developed and confident to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Sharing good practice and learning from across the trust, STP region or healthcare setting about where work-based learning is working well and can be adopted, can be integral to rolling out work-based learning across the workplace. Opportunities can be provided to develop a variety of skills in different settings, such as shadowing, mentoring, undertaking projects, and attending training sessions.

To increase work-based learning at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, the trust has placed work experience students in clinical settings for one to two weeks to get teams used to having a learner in the workplace. Line managers have seen positive outcomes and have extended the length of time learners are in the clinical setting by offering apprenticeships.

Workforce planning and strategy

The starting point for employers looking at how to integrate work-based learning programmes into workforce strategy and planning is to know and compare your current workforce and the workforce that your organisation needs in the future. The existing data that your organisation holds will show you what is happening and help you to identify where work-based learning programmes may benefit key skill shortage areas, by developing talent and succession plans and support your workforce supply.

Many organisations are also using work-based learning programmes such as apprenticeships as a 'grow your own' pathway to support career development, reduce vacancies and attract and retain staff. Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust has done this to [strengthen its nursing supply](#).

Developing work-based learning programmes across all levels of the workforce based on an understanding of the skills needed across services can also strengthen workforce planning and strategy. Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation trust has increased the range of disciplines and departments offering apprenticeships after undertaking an exercise to understand which areas the organisation [needed support from apprenticeships](#).

Infrastructure

A culture of work-based learning takes time to embed and it takes time for the leadership and culture to take effect in all parts of the organisation. The longevity of a programme is an important factor in an organisation's success in work-based learning programmes. Introducing a lead to co-ordinate and manage learning long-term can support with this.

Building capacity to supervise learners is another way in which to build

infrastructure for work-based learning. James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has [increased capacity](#) to supervise learners by using the CLIP supervision model.

Relationships with education providers

Building relationships with education providers is also required. The introduction of new higher apprenticeship standards in health (in particular nursing and [nursing associate](#) apprenticeships) has required a new focus on relationships between employers and higher education institutes (HEIs).

There is a new shift in relationships between employers and HEIs, with employers becoming a customer. Successful [apprenticeships](#) are found where this new or altered relationship is embraced and made best use of. As part of relationship building, having open and honest conversations about which delivery models for training programmes work best for your organisation is important. The [employer guide to nursing associates](#) has examples of the different models used to set up nursing associate programmes.

Actions to consider

- Identify where supply is an issue in your organisation. Are there shortages within specific staff groups, demographics, departments or teams?
- Consider how a variety of different types of work-based learning programmes can support with workforce supply in these areas.
- You may want to view the [training routes into the NHS infographic](#) to help you consider the different routes available to complement your traditional education and recruitment routes. The [HASO website](#) is a useful resource which shows the apprenticeship standards available and in development.

Further information

- www.nhsemployers.org/workbasedlearning
- www.nhsemployers.org/apprenticeships
- www.nhsemployers.org/education

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