
Student digital experience Tracker

Case study: Key Training

Context

Key Training is a national training organisation, providing apprenticeships in Business Admin, Customer Service, Sales, Recruitment, IT, Team Leading, Management and Employment Related Services.

Funded through Skills Funding Agency and The Education Funding Agency, Key Training has approximately 1200 apprentices in training. A virtual learning environment/e-portfolio system is used to support learners wherever they are based, and the provider is keen to increase the online elements of its courses.

Why the Tracker was used

Key Training wanted to use the Tracker findings to inform the development of its digital environment and its new blended learning provision. The new apprenticeship standards – and changes in the way that training providers work – have added impetus to these developments. The Functional Skills Manager, Dawn Green, who led the pilot, was keen to have evidence about learners' digital experiences to see if these could be used to support more blended approaches, and to compare findings with providers in other settings.

Engaging key staff and learners

After she heard about the Tracker pilot, the project lead presented a case for Key Training to be involved to the Quality Team – the Quality Director and Quality Managers for the Curriculum, e-Portfolio and Data – and through them gained the support of the Board. Training Consultants were engaged at regional Training Meetings to ensure that they raised the project with their learners.

All Key Training learners are work-based, so contact was via email, messaging within the VLE/e-portfolio system and at face-to-face Training Consultant visits. Some learners were told about the Tracker by telephone as part of a telephone support session. The overall approach was to explain how digital skills are relevant to learners' future

prospects and study outcomes. They were also offered a prize draw incentive. Reminders were sent by email, e-portfolio, and via Training Consultants. Overall the project achieved a response rate of 206 – an excellent result for such diversely-located learners.

What the Tracker found

Key Training learners were significantly more likely than FE/skills average to say they had '*Created a personal record of your learning e.g. using a blog or e-portfolio*' but less likely to have worked online with others or produced work in a digital format. This fully reflects the kind of learning undertaken and the focus on building a personal learning record.

Learners were significantly more likely than sector average to positively rate their support and guidance. This was true for every aspect of their digital learning, but especially for *Creat[ing] a positive online profile (e.g. LinkedIn, CV, e-portfolio)* and *Develop[ing] relevant digital skills*. Seventy per cent agreed that: '*When technology is used by teaching staff, it helps my learning experience*' and 73% (very considerably above sector average) agreed that '*Online assessments are delivered and managed well*'.

In the free text responses, many participants wanted Key Training to '*keep*' providing support and guidance, confirming that these are areas in which the college is performing well. The '*start*' and '*stop*' responses both featured negative comments about the current VLE/e-Portfolio environment, including its layout, design and navigation. However, the most common response to these questions was to change '*nothing*', in other words that digital provision and support is already meeting learners' needs: '*In my opinion there is nothing that I think should be stopped, everything has proven effective towards my development*'.

Responses and reflections

At present the Quality Team at Key Training is looking in detail at the data and deciding how best to respond. Negative comments about the virtual learning environment and a relatively low rating for its usefulness are being taken very seriously, and the Tracker has allowed attention to be focused on this issue. Proposed solutions will then be reported back to learners alongside the data they have provided, so they can clearly see how each point is being followed up.

"Provides useful data and focuses providers on improving service through use of technology"

Dawn Green, Functional Skills Manager

Key lessons

1. The Tracker is straightforward to deliver to work-based learners because of the use of a single URL to an open web site.
2. Work-based learners have specific concerns in their digital experience, which the Tracker can help organisations to understand and address.
3. Technology plays a pivotal role in supporting learners in the workplace. These learners can have a fragmented experience of technology use, but the Tracker allows them to see their digital learning in the round and to comment on it in a safe way.