

The Maynard Review (2016) introduced inclusive apprenticeships by lowering the academic requirements that apprentices must achieve to Entry Level 3 in maths and English. These apprenticeships offer young disabled people who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) an effective pathway into paid employment. However, there were challenges to understand the funding options that could be used to set them up.

This case study describes the experience of Little Gate Farm, a supported employment provider in East Sussex¹, as well as Heathercroft Training Academy and Dynamic Training in establishing an inclusive apprenticeship for a young person with special educational needs.

What we know about apprenticeships

Hiring an apprentice is a productive and effective way for any business to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce. An apprenticeship is a genuine job that is supported by a skills development and assessment programme. It is a way for individuals to earn while they learn gaining valuable skills and knowledge in a specific job role. The apprentice gains skills and knowledge through a combination of learning in the workplace and off-the-job training. Apprenticeships benefit employers and individuals, and by boosting the skills of the workforce, they help to improve economic productivity.

Employers can offer apprenticeships to new recruits or use them to grow talent within their current workforce. Apprenticeships equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours they need for specific job roles, future employment and progression.

Employers have a legal duty under the Equality Act (2010) to not discriminate against individuals with disabilities, and to provide reasonable adjustments for them in the workplace. However, an inclusive approach also makes good business sense as many disabled employees are highly successful in their careers and are enormous assets to their employers. It can also increase accessibility to other staff and customers and improve staff productivity, retention and absence rates.

There have been recent changes to the English and maths requirements for inclusive apprenticeships for young people with a learning difficulty or disability who have an Education Health and Care Plan, lowering it to an Entry Level 3 qualification. It will make completing an apprenticeship more achievable for those who are able to meet all the occupational requirements of their role, but who may struggle to achieve English and maths qualifications at the level normally required.



Inclusive apprenticeships in health and social care

Little Gate Farm was keen to see how they could use the changes in legislation to offer inclusive apprenticeships. They decided to specifically look at health and social care as they were aware of the skills gap in this sector in the county. They were also supporting many young disabled people who had an interest in working in the care industry.

Little Gate Farm was successful in obtaining a small grant from Skills for Care to develop their provision supporting people into the health and social care sector. As a result, they formed a partnership with a training provider, initially Heathercroft Training Academy and now Dynamic Training. Both organisations had a successful track record of supporting young disabled people into paid employment.

Challenges

There were two main challenges that the partnership had to overcome to ensure that they were able to offer inclusive apprenticeships to young people with an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the health and social care sector. The first challenge was understanding the funding, which was further complicated with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and the merging of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to become the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA).

There was confusion as to whether funding would be needed from the local authority from their high needs funding block given that EHCPs continue when young people start an apprenticeship. It also wasn't fully understood about where the funding was to ensure that young people's additional needs were fully met in both the workplace and with their study towards a qualification.

In addition, apprenticeships had not been previously considered for the young people they were supporting as there was not the belief from their previous education providers that they would be able to achieve at the level required. As a result, apprenticeship provision was not in their EHCPs which came at a time when the local authority was having to ensure that all previous statements and learning difficulty assessments were converted by the end of March 2018.

Outcome

Funding to fully support the inclusive apprenticeships was successfully resolved. There is additional funding through the EFSA to meet the additional needs of disabled people on the training element of their apprenticeship, which can be up to a maximum of £19k. If learning support costs for an apprentice will exceed this maximum, there is the ability to claim for exceptional learning support without needing funding from the local authority's high needs funding block. It was also discovered that there was a £1000 incentive for employers if they take on an apprentice with an EHCP².

There is also additional funding to support young people in their paid apprenticeship through Access to Work. Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for people who have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. Support can be provided where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments.

Apprentices with a disability can get help paying for support they may need because of their disability and these include:

- Aids, equipment and adaptations in the workplace;
- Travel to and in work;
- Communication support at interviews;
- Support workers;
- Job coaches;
- Interpreters.

If an apprentice has a mental health condition, there is also the Mental Health Support Service. This can give

advice and guidance to employers to help them better understand mental ill health and how they can support their employees as well as supporting young people to develop a support plan³.

When the funding issues were resolved, this enabled the local authority to review and up-date EHCPs to ensure that an apprenticeship was included as part of their provision to realise their employment aspirations. To date, one young person with an EHCP has started an apprenticeship in health and social care. They completed a supported internship at a local college and then started an inclusive apprenticeship.

This person also received travel training and is now travelling independently. Another young man is completing the same course at the local college and hopes to commence an apprenticeship in the summer.

Conclusion

Apprenticeships offer many young disabled people an effective pathway into paid employment to support them to realise their career aspirations. They provide an alternative to traditional forms of learning in a classroom and are ideal for young people who have a preference to learn through doing. A successful partnership is an important factor bringing together training and supported employment providers to best meet all the additional needs of young people to ensure success.

Further information about inclusive apprenticeships can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-guide-for-employers> and <http://www.employer-toolkit.org.uk/>.

¹ <http://www.littlegate.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-employment/>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/697992/Provider_v6.pdf

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers/access-to-work-factsheet-for-employers>