

Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley

**Core Skills Pilot Project
2003/2004**

Evaluation Report

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by
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Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the performance of the Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley Workforce Development Programme Core Skills Pilot. The study includes an analysis of process, performance, and sustainability of programme outcomes. In particular, the work identifies the effectiveness of the approach and compares and contrasts two different types of provision. SEFV also wishes to evaluate the success of the Pilot with a view to potential development. Scottish Enterprise Fife have also undertaken a Core Skills project, which is in the process of being evaluated. At this time, no comparisons are able to be drawn between the two projects.

Project Background

The Core Skills Pilot was designed to look at the effectiveness of two differing approaches to training in Core Skills – one using a traditional classroom style approach and a second using a supported distance e-learning approach. The project outputs were to be as follows:

- ◆ 12 companies were to be involved in the project
- ◆ 50 individuals with low skills would complete an agreed learning plan and a further 50 individuals would increase their skills and knowledge

A group of training providers who had expressed an interest in the project, were approached and two selected to carry out the work. They were Clackmannanshire Training & Learning Centre (CTLTC) who took on the traditional training approach, and IT Skills for All, who took the supported distance e-learning approach. The Pilot was innovative in approach and attracted 100% funding support.

The programme commenced in September 2003 and was due to finish in March 2004. However, it was extended until June 2004 to meet the demand from employers for the programme, and to allow trainees to complete their learning plans and achieve their Core Skills.

Employers were approached by both training providers, initially by mail shot, followed up by telephone contact and then visits to employer sites for more detailed discussions and agreement.

The traditional approach provider was impacted by a change in staffing, a relocation of offices and the style of off job delivery that was not the preferred option for employers. The standard of training and delivery was high. The conversion rates were as follows: 3 companies and 16 trainees.

The supported distance e-learning marketing approach increased demand to such a level that it necessitated a contract extension to meet the demand. This resulted in 21 companies and 100 trainees participating in the pilot. The

success of this process was due to the proactive approach taken to the recruiting of organisations, the employer buying in to a programme that did not take trainees away from their place of work and the trainees' preference for a non "classroom based" approach. The relevance of Core Skills to both employers and trainees was also a factor. The fact that this approach was enhanced with the incentive of free ECDL training is also a contributing factor to the overall success of this approach.

Employers and trainees enjoyed the Core Skills programme, but found it difficult to understand Core Skills levels, achievement measures, timescales and outcomes. If the programme is to run again there is a need for some initial explanation documentation to be produced.

The overall results of the project were as follows:

Traditional approach

- ◆ 3 companies
- ◆ 16 trainees completing a total of 31 Core Skills modules

Distance e-learning approach

- ◆ 21 companies
- ◆ 100 trainees completing a total of 500 Core Skills modules

The project achieved well in excess of its target outputs, with the supported distance e-learning based approach being particularly successful. This resulted in a total of 24 companies and 116 trainees participating in the pilot and completing 531 core skills modules at Access level 3.

Recommendations for future delivery

Based on this, it is proposed that in future, the distance-learning model be used for future Core Skills programmes delivered through training providers (at the present time this refers to Access 3 only). It reduces time away from work, ensures relevance of training, builds team working, is non-threatening, and improves individual's skills and can be supported cost effectively. There is clear evidence which supports carrying out Core Skills training with more than one trainee at a time within organisations, as this allows them to support each other, and develop greater team working skills.

However, before mainstreaming this pilot, it is clear that a document explaining to employers and trainees what Core Skills are, the levels, achievement measures, timescales and outcomes is required. In addition, the Core Skills process and outcomes need to be effectively communicated, and timescales clearly defined to ensure future employer and trainee commitment.

In an attempt to stimulate employer interest in and demand for Core Skills, SEFV should consider contracting with training providers to deliver Access 3

Core Skills. In addition, the training providers could deliver ENTO modules to support the development of in-house training and development abilities, which could take on the delivery of Core Skills at all levels. The training providers could then assist smaller organisations with the internal and external verification processes, as required. This would ensure skills development becomes an integrated and inherent part in the business development process, and would offer a sustainable approach to develop training and mentoring skills within organisations and allow them to develop the Core Skills of their own trainees.

Alternatively, SEFV could follow the same process as above but include PC Passport as an introductory offer to stimulate interest in Core Skills (the IT element of Core Skills has been perceived as most beneficial by both employers and trainees). It is clear from the evaluation that ECDL was particularly useful in stimulating interest in Core Skills. However trainees found the ECDL to be of too high a level for them. If PC Passport was used instead of ECDL, then it may stimulate interest while at the same time adjusting the programme in response to candidate feedback and reducing costs by one third.

Core Skills represents an ideal method of developing the skills required for trainees in all industries in the SEFV area. It delivers the skills they require and if the distance e-learning option approach is tied with PC Passport (which will in the near future have the ability to be verified online) then SEFV can deliver a Core Skills programme online and to SQA standards. Efforts should be focussed in SEFV on sectors of industrial growth or reduction to maximise the return on investment. In the short term this would be: Construction, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Leisure, Tourism, Banking/Financial and Insurance, Public Services, Warehouse/Transport/Distribution. In addition, it would be beneficial to target liP and Forum companies, who have already expressed an interest in the training and development of their staff.

Summary

This pilot was innovative, practical and cost effective and represents a creative solution to employers' and trainees' Core Skills needs. It is recommended that it is rolled out to employers on a 50% funding basis, once the recommendations for change have been implemented.

Core Skills Pilot - Strategic Context

In September 2003 the Local Economic Forum (LEF) for Forth Valley set out its Regional Economic Strategy for the area. Their overall vision is to create “*a thriving and diverse economy, well connected nationally and internationally, where prosperity is growing throughout the population*”. The importance of ensuring a highly skilled and flexible workforce – both now and in the future - is fundamental to this vision.

The need for a high quality and diverse training infrastructure, which is focused on delivering skills and learning to meet local labour market needs, is therefore key to the Forth Valley economy. There are two elements of delivery here, which are closely interlinked:

1. The need to support local businesses to meet their recruitment needs, and develop their existing workforce as part of a holistic business development strategy.

The SEFV Core Skills pilot, as an element of the Workforce Development Programme, has demonstrated the effectiveness of workforce learning in supporting local businesses to fulfil their existing and future business development needs.

2. The need to support the future workforce – both youth and adult – not just to access employment, but to progress in work. This element of delivery is supported by mainstream National Programmes, which includes Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships (SS/MA) and Training for Work (TfW).

Core Skills Pilot - Introduction

Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley decided in September 2003 to embark on a Core Skills pilot project, which was both innovative and creative in approach. Two organisations who had previously expressed an interest were invited to participate in the project, engaging local employers and employer identified trainees in core skills development.

The pilot commenced on 1st September 2003 and was extended beyond the original timescale of 31 March 2004 (until June 2004) due to demand, and exceeded the targets for the pilot. The project contributed to the SE Network's target of low skilled, low paid workers undertaking an agreed learning plan.

The pilot project was designed to ascertain the effectiveness of two very different approaches - one that had the capability of being carried out remotely in the workplace using technology (the distance e-learning

approach), and the other through a personal training approach (the traditional classroom style approach).

The key outputs for providers' were:

Distance e-learning approach

- 6 companies involved in the project
- 30 individuals with low skills completing an agreed learning plan
- 30 individuals increasing their skills and confidence (alternative outcome)

Traditional approach

- 6 companies involved in the project
- 20 individuals with low skills completing an agreed learning plan
- 20 individuals increasing their skills and confidence (alternative outcome)

In this evaluation we will examine the marketing, individual learning plans, conversion statistics, trainees' views, employers' views, conclusions and overall recommendations.

What are Core Skills?

There are 5 core skills, and 20 core skills units – one at each of 4 levels, for each core skill.

Communication – this includes oral and written communication and covers talking and listening, reading and writing. For example, using the telephone, taking part in discussions, writing letters and reports and understanding information from a leaflet.

Numeracy – this involves using number skills and graphical information and would include using tables, diagrams, graphs and symbols and working with money and measurements.

Information Technology – this skill involves using computers and information technology and covers finding, processing, presenting and communicating information. For example, using the internet and e-mail and preparing documents and presentations.

Problem Solving – includes thinking through a situation (analysing problems and critical thinking), deciding what to do and how to do it (planning and organising) and getting the resources together and doing it (completing an activity to solve a problem). Considering how successful the plan was and how well it was carried out (reviewing and evaluating) will identify how well this problem solving activity worked in practice.

Working with Others – this involves working with others in groups to complete an activity (analysing and preparing), agreeing how members of a group will tackle a task (planning and negotiating) and doing it (working together). Group members will consider how effective their own contribution was (checking and evaluating) in completing the task.

Levels

There are 4 levels of core skills:

Access 3 - simple - designed for those who have little or no skill and experience of using the skill in a workplace setting and who need support in doing so. Work would be basic and familiar, for example at trainee level.

Intermediate 1 - straightforward - designed for those who have some skill and experience of using the skill in a workplace setting, for example at assistant worker level.

Intermediate 2 - routine but with some complex features - designed for those who have a reasonable level of skill and experience of using the skill in a workplace setting, for example at intermediate or supervisor level.

Higher - complex - designed for those who have significant skill and experience of using the skill in a workplace setting, for example at managerial level.

For comparison purposes, the above levels of Core Skills can be mapped to equivalent Scottish Credit & Qualifications Frameworks (SCQF) levels as follows:

Core skills	SCQF
Higher	SCQF Level 6
Intermediate 2	SCQF Level 5
Intermediate 1	SCQF Level 4
Access 3	SCQF Level 3
Access 2	SCQF Level 2

The Training Organisations and Their Differing Approaches

The initial approach from both organisations in the Core Skills Pilot was similar, in that both used letters followed up by telephone calls. The content of the letters indicated that the project was commencing and that employers should contact the provider if they considered they had any trainees that they thought would benefit. In addition the traditional approach provider supplied a short leaflet explaining about Core Skills (Appendix 1) and the supported distance e-learning provider introduced an incentive offering an ECDL training package.

The response rate from employers to over 400 letters and subsequent follow up from each provider was as follows: for the supported distance e-learning approach, the conversion rate in companies coming on board was 4.25%; for the traditional approach, it was 0.75%.

The difference in conversion rates can be put down to some extent to the disruption in terms of staff and accommodation at the provider following the traditional approach, as well as employers' attitude to removing trainees from their place of work. The supported distance e-learning provider offered ECDL and supplied an approach that reduced trainees' time away from work and did not appear to trainees as a "classroom" approach to training. Finally the commercial approach taken by the supported distance e-learning provider in its follow up of letters and telephone calls also added to the conversion rates.

The telephone calls and particularly the visits carried out by the training providers helped clarify the objectives and benefits of Core Skills. However, in talking to employers and trainees it was apparent that the initial letters did not give enough detail for them or their staff. The telephone calls and visits helped but employers considered that an explanatory leaflet, which clarified core skills levels, timescales and commitments, would have been helpful in understanding the whole process.

Trainees expressed a need for clarity in explaining what Core Skills are, and what they have to achieve in order to meet a particular Core Skill, and a definition of the measures and timescales that could apply would have been beneficial, as long as it was simply worded.

Individual Learning Plans

The Individual Learning Plans, produced by both training providers were comprehensive and detailed and ascertained the trainees' initial skill level, explained what they were going to be doing, the specific area of development being addressed, any special needs clarified and the contact and support process stated. The forms were clear and easy to complete and had a section for the candidate to sign and date.

The trainees found the individual learning plans useful and considered that they went some way to explaining Core Skills, but not in any great detail. The employers and trainees have constantly raised the lack of clarity in defining Core Skills and did so again when considering the Individual Learning Plans. (Appendices 2&3).

Structure and Conversion Rates

The two organisations were asked to approach the project in differing manners as previously discussed. The results from the differing approaches clearly demonstrate that the distance e-learning approach of working with individuals who remain in the workplace, proved highly successful. This approach was successful not only in the number of trainees attracted, but also in the response from employers in terms of positive effects and lack of time away from the workplace and also from trainees in their willingness and eagerness to go through all 5 Core Skills areas. It must be noted that both training providers used Core Skills Access Level 3 with the individuals involved in their pilots.

Employers were happy with the relevance of the project to the individual trainees, the improvement in performance of individuals, the level of support given by the provider and the increase in confidence and at times competence of the trainees.

The trainees found the level of materials met their needs and on occasions where the trainees from one provider worked together, then the team effect greatly increased their ability to get through the work and built relationships in the workplace.

The results for the distance e-learning approach were 100 trainees within 21 companies, all working through the 5 core skills areas. With the traditional approach, 16 trainees within 3 companies worked through 2 core skill areas, i.e. ICT and Numeracy.

The traditional approach was a more hands-on individual approach away from the workplace. From speaking to the employers they supported the staff in carrying out the training but were concerned that they were taking time away from the workplace. The one hour taken at the centre also had an element of travelling either side, which increased the time away from the workplace.

The trainees' response to this approach was equally positive and the level of support given in both cases by the providers, in terms of materials and accessibility of support, was excellent.

In terms of numerical results it is clear that the approach adopted in the distance e-learning approach exceeded all targets and to express this numerically giving one point for every core skill completed, then we are looking at a figure of $100 \times 5 = 500$ core skills modules completed.

In the case of the traditional approach then we are looking at a total of 31 modules (15 trainees completed 2 core skills modules = 30, plus 1 trainee who completed one core skills module = 31). These results were impacted and compounded by problems of staffing and a change of location, but this cannot be totally responsible for the variance that exists between the two approaches.

The less intrusive approach, in terms of trainees' time taken by distance e-learning provider, was particularly attractive to employers. Trainees also liked the non-classroom approach, which meant that they could admit a lack of a core skill and work on improving it without having to leave their workplace. In talking to trainees, they felt a classroom approach reminded them of school where they may not have been successful.

CASE STUDIES

Trainees' Views 1

One trainee was considering self-employment and wanted to learn about spreadsheets so that he could control the accounts. Another wanted to increase his Internet skills. His family and home were far away and he found that his competence in using email had improved his ability to communicate with friends and family, rather than through expensive phone calls. He also found that his writing skills were improved. He recommended this type of approach to help people away from home to settle more quickly into a new environment.

Another trainee said that for the first time in his life, his daughter had approached him rather than his wife with regard to her homework, because he now had more advanced computing skills. The difference Core Skills had made to him was not only in his own development, but also in that of his children and his own self-esteem.

Employers' Views 1

This organisation recognised that its staff needed assistance in developing their Core Skills and put forward four employees to be part of the pilot. The group got a variety of benefits from this core skills intervention. The employer considered the distance e-learning approach the most appropriate, as it did not remove the trainees from the workplace, thereby reducing the need for cover and any additional staffing.

The employer allowed the group to work together during quiet times of the week and therefore maintained the level of service required, while facilitating the trainees' development of their Core Skills.

The employer was pleased with the improvement in the Core Skills but believed that the greatest benefit to the company had come from the team working that had developed as well as improved communication.

Trainees' Views 2

One of the group was dyslexic and the other two members of the group would normally not have approached him for assistance. This trainee demonstrated an excellent ability in IT skills and was soon helping his colleagues with some of their workload and they subsequently referred to him for assistance more often in the workplace. They consequently supported him in his studies. In the end the trainees got a better understanding of IT but they also gained a far greater understanding of each other's abilities.

Employers' Views 2

A service organisation employer wished to develop the core skills of his staff, and chose the distance e-learning approach as he considered it best fitted his operational needs. The employer recognised that three of his staff needed particular help with IT and Communications.

He was pleased the way the workforce gained the core skills but was unhappy about the lack of clarity in the definition of core skills, the omission of timescales and the lack of outcome measurements for trainees.

He also said that his staff who had previously attended traditional courses with this training organisation, found the level of support given on this occasion was not perceived to be at a similar level. He considered that the trainees were not receiving the one-to-one support they had previously received. However the trainees, despite commenting on the difference in support level for this training, believed that the opportunity to work together in a group far outweighed any change in support level.

Trainees' Views 3

This trainee worked in a nursery and had responsibility for checking that the children's information was maintained. The paper-based system that they used made it difficult to ensure that all relevant information for each child was up to date.

She decided after discussion with her manager to go through the Core Skills the traditional way. She was not given time off to attend the provider's centre and did so in her own time prior to commencing her shift. She greatly increased her skills in Word and Excel and converted the paper system to a computerised system, which made analysis of the information easier and its content quickly capable of being updated. She enjoyed the support of her tutor and the relaxed and supportive learning environment that had been created.

Employers' Views 3

The manager of the nursery had supported the trainee in developing her Core Skills as a method of improving the standard and format of record keeping. She was pleased with the level of support and standard of training given but would have struggled with her trainee taking the traditional approach if the trainee had wanted to take time off from work to attend training, if so then she did not know if they would have participated.

The end result for the organisation was an accurate recording system being set up, which fully met their external assessment criteria. This removed an area that had previously caused concern at assessment times and allowed them to issue a professional document to parents to check details. It had therefore improved the Core Skills of the individual and the professionalism of the record keeping within the company.

Training Providers' Views

The distance e-learning approach training provider found that the incentivisation of their Core Skills delivery model with free ECDL greatly increased the attractiveness of Core Skills to both employers and trainees. They recruited their initial 30 trainees, and were able to take on another 70 candidates, as the distance e-learning approach was less demanding in terms of tutor time and allowed flexibility of utilisation that cannot be matched in a traditional approach.

The distance learning trainees normally worked in groups, and they attended the distance learning centre once a week, and worked at home on the work between times. Access to computers was only available at the provider's premises (or at home for those who had them).

They worked at their Core Skills modules together, supporting and stimulating each other to achieve. They were used to working as a team and found this style of learning helped them all to move through the modules at a varied pace, but never letting anyone fall too far out of line with the rest of the group. They worked well with their Tutor who was attentive and adaptable to their needs.

This provider would be keen to progress with a similar project to the Pilot at Access Level 3, but considered the introduction of the Intermediate 1 & 2 and Higher levels would be more difficult to manage due to the level of external involvement and verification that would be necessary.

This provider exceeded the original targets and was subsequently provided with additional funding under the same contract terms and conditions to facilitate a total of 70 additional trainees and 12 companies. They would be more than willing to proceed with the Core Skills Programme in its present format.

They had enjoyed the pilot and had found working with groups had been easier than working with individuals. The team working and peer support offered by a group had led to individuals feeling more confident about the process. The most instantly rewarding issue for the participating organisations had been the increased IT Skills and the improved communication and team working.

The traditional approach Training Provider found the recruitment of individuals onto the pilot more difficult than the distance e-learning provider. There are a number of reasons for this, including the impact of a relocation of premises and an unforeseen change in staffing levels.

They found that their traditional approach was perhaps not as well received by employers who were concerned about travelling time to and from the training centre. Some trainees were concerned about a classroom style approach. There were also some difficulties in communicating the outcomes and benefits to be achieved by participating in the core skills project to employers. The training provider considered that an incentive such as ECDL being included in Core Skills training would have attracted more employers.

The provider concentrated on developing and tailoring an individual approach to each client. This was time intensive in terms of tutors and made the overall financial viability of the project less positive. The provider did commit to complete the learning plans and achievement of Core Skills for all trainees.

The IT element was found to be the most attractive to employers and trainees alike.

In discussion with the provider it was clear that this approach in terms of effort to recruit and trainee support is not one that they would chose in the future to support. They would however be willing to use the skills they have developed in the Pilot to carry out such work using a distance learning approach.

The provider considered that if they were delivering a similar type of programme again, they would operate on a mixture of distance e-learning, plus traditional classroom type approaches for groups where appropriate.

Management in the Future

It is clear that the output-based format for funding meets SEFV's needs and stimulates training providers to achieve results in order to maximise the funding and secure full payment. The training providers found the current payments acceptable. It may however be more difficult to gain training provider buy-in to Core Skills at the levels above Access 3, which require external involvement in assessment of the modules and could require a differing pricing structure to attract training providers.

Potential Funding Options

In order to engage employers in a 50% funding arrangement for future Core Skills programmes then the demonstration of outcomes, timescales and benefits will need to be clearly communicated.

The modular nature of the programme is attractive, in that they can "pick and mix" to meet a company's or individual trainee's requirements, but whether employers will be willing to pay at the Access 3 level will depend on the outcomes being met.

It may be that at the Access 3 level it is funded at 90% because it meets basic needs and that as the person progresses through the levels, the degree of contribution from the organisation increases in line with the cost benefit of the investment in training to them, reaching 50% at the advanced level.

Management of Project

If Core Skills is to become a standard programme then the processes are in place to manage this within SEFV already. Contracts could be adjusted to include or exclude Core Skills at a variety of levels.

One option may be to contract with training providers to deliver Access 3 Core Skills as a method of stimulating employer interest in Core Skills. They could then deliver ENTO modules to support the development of in-house training and development abilities, which could take on the delivery of Core Skills at all levels. The providers could then assist smaller organisations with internal and external verification.

Alternatively, SEFV could follow the same process as above but include PC Passport as an introductory offer to stimulate interest in Core Skills. It is clear from the evaluation that ECDL was particularly useful in stimulating interest in Core Skills. However trainees found the ECDL to be of too high a level for them. If PC Passport was used instead of ECDL, then it may stimulate interest while at the same time adjusting the programme in response to candidate feedback and reducing costs by one third.

In a more commercial approach SEFV would only contract at the Access 3 Level with training providers who are delivering at the Intermediate 1 & 2 and

Higher levels. The level of delivery in terms of numbers and outcomes would determine in the next year the numbers of Access 3 candidates they would be allowed to recruit.

This approach would stimulate the development of the higher levels while at the same time recognising the increased output benefits received by the companies from the Core Skills training.

Core Skills – The Future

SEFV are keen to build on the success of the core skills pilot, and develop it as a mainstream programme that will help support the business development needs of local companies. Consideration should be given to alternative and progressive ways of achieving this, and the following are suggested ways forward.

PC Passport

PC Passport is designed for anyone who wants to develop or improve their IT skills, and because it exists at three levels, most people will find a level an appropriate course to match their skill level.

The Beginner course is ideal for the absolute novice, and has 3 mandatory units:

- ◆ Word Processing
- ◆ Spreadsheets
- ◆ Internet

No prior experience is required for this level and the component Units are very straightforward.

The Intermediate course is designed for the 'competent user' and has 4 mandatory units, which focus on key skills required in the modern workplace:

- ◆ Word Processing
- ◆ Spreadsheets
- ◆ Internet
- ◆ Presentations

The Advanced course is designed for IT experts - those individuals who co-workers come to for help, and consists of 5 mandatory units:

- ◆ Word Processing
- ◆ Spreadsheets
- ◆ Internet
- ◆ Presentations
- ◆ Database

There are no exams in PC Passport. Knowledge and understanding are assessed using objective questions, practical skills are assessed through observation and/or practical exercises. These courses are highly vocational, focusing on industry standard software and skills. However, they are not directly related to a specific software manufacturer - instead they seek to teach transferable skills that can be used in a range of environments - which is why PC Passport would be particularly suitable for core skills development by meeting the needs of:

- ◆ trainees who want to enhance their IT skills or gain certification for their existing skills
- ◆ professionals as part of their continued professional development

ENTO Awards

ENTO is a European Network of Training Organisations for local and regional authorities from almost all of the 43 Council of Europe member States.

The use of ENTO Learning and Development units is proposed as a method of sustaining Core Skills in the participating companies in the longer term. The standards set by ENTO are detailed below and as they closely reflect the SEFV Workforce development objectives it seems appropriate to use this standard to develop internal trainers within participating companies. The modular approach allows companies, irrespective of their size, to pick the modules that are necessary to develop their own Core Skills programme.

The ENTO Standards are:

- ◆ Plan How to Deliver Basic Skills in the Workplace
- ◆ Introduce Training for Basic Skills in the Workplace
- ◆ Support How Basic Skills are Delivered in the Workplace
- ◆ Support People Learning Basic Skills in the Workplace

The ENTO qualifications are:

- ◆ Certificate in Basic Skills in the Workplace
- ◆ Certificate in Basic Skill Support in the Workplace

Activities

- ◆ Identifying the organisation's needs for developing basic skills
- ◆ Selling the basic skills to employers, trainees and their representatives
- ◆ Analysing training needs for job processes
- ◆ Assessing the Basic Skills that learners achieve

It is recommended that the following modules would be delivered to participating organisations nominated training and development trainees. They would give the internal trainers the basic skills required to develop their own internal training which would more closely meet the needs of the business and individual trainees.

- L3 Identify individual learning aims and programmes
- L5 Agree learning programmes with learners
- L6 Develop training sessions
- L12 Enable individual learning through coaching
- L14 Support learners by mentoring in the workplace
- L15 Support and advise individual learners
- L4 Design learning programmes

The above mentioned modules could be added to as time and the individual progressed, leading to at least one person trained to an accredited standard, within each organisation. The individual trainers could then work with training providers to take trainees through Core Skills at all 4 levels.

This would produce sustainability, ownership and commitment from companies thereby sustaining Core Skills development in the longer term and providing an exit strategy for SEFV's involvement in the delivery mechanisms of Core Skills.

Conclusions

This was an original and creative method of addressing the issue of Core Skills, which examined the most effective method of training delivery that would meet both employer and trainee needs. It gained commitment from employers and trainees alike and managed to meet not only the Core Skills requirements but delivered benefits to employers, such as better team work and communication and to trainees of confidence building and self esteem.

The project achieved well in excess of its target outputs, with the supported distance e-learning based approach being particularly successful. A total of 24 companies with 116 trainees completed 531 core skills modules at Access 3. (It must be understood that Access 3 equates to SCQF Level 3, and is lower than SVQ Level 1).

In considering the two approaches to the Core Skills pilot, it is clear that the most effective method was the supported distance e-learning approach. It clearly met employers' needs for minimum time away from normal working environment, and the trainees' needs for a non-threatening, supported method of developing their Core Skills. This approach resulted in the highest involvement levels in terms of companies and candidates, as well as the number of Core Skills completed by candidates. It should be noted that these figures could have been impacted by the additional incentive of ECDL offered by this approach.

The traditional approach, which was focused on off job training, was unable to attract the same numbers of either employers or trainees and was more time-consuming in achieving unit completion. This is not a reflection on the standard of training, but more so of the difficulties incurred by the traditional approach provider and the more time-consuming approach, which is less attractive to employers.

The Individual Learning Plans produced by the training providers were clear and met all requirements in terms of information collected, gap analysis and structure of learning (Appendices 2&3).

In considering the employers' and trainees' views of the Core Skills programme the IT element was the most immediately beneficial training, in that trainees felt enabled to carry out work they had never done before, and employers saw increased levels of effectiveness.

Employers and trainees found it difficult to initially understand the concept of Core Skills especially in terms of levels, achievement measures, timescales and outcomes.

Trainees liked the non-pressurised approach offered by Core Skills at the Access 3 Level. The level of support offered by both providers met the trainees' requirements without being intrusive or "school like" which for trainees who do not have a high level of formal education was vitally important.

Employers and trainees both considered that if more than one trainee was involved in the process then there was a greater return in terms of working together than would be achieved when working individually.

They found that in a group, each trainee brought skills that were not always previously identified by colleagues. This developed improved team working and problem solving through a better understanding of colleagues' strengths and weaknesses.

When the supported distance e-learning approach provider began to offer ECDL as part of the Core Skills Programme, then the whole process became clearer in terms of what would be achieved for both employers and trainees. The dramatic difference in performance in terms of conversion of contacts and trainees completing Core Skills was due, in the main, to the supported distance learning approach, which met the employers' need for reduced time away from work and the trainees' need for a flexible approach to learning.

The concept of Core Skills was not initially clearly understood by employers or trainees. It was therefore more difficult for the training providers who worked hard to sell the concept and who would have benefited from an information pack that clearly explained Core Skills. The Pilot would have benefited from clearer marketing materials that demonstrated benefits and timescales. The introduction of a qualification incentive had a beneficial effect on attracting employers and trainees although it would appear more appropriate to use PC Passport, which will soon be e-enabled. The use of ENTO modules would complete a comprehensive package, which would not only assist in the achievement of Workforce Development targets, but would supply organisations with an in-house learning and development facility.

Finally it was clear the training and support provided by both training providers was of the highest standard and was appreciated by trainees and employers.

This pilot was innovative and practical and represents a creative solution to employer and trainees' core skills needs. This was a successful pilot, which met the Core Skills outcomes, but also allowed the individual trainees to achieve much more in terms of their confidence and self-esteem. The companies gained more effective teams of motivated employees with the Core Skills necessary to grow their businesses.

The Workforce Development Target of upskilling low skilled, paid workers via Core Skills development was fully met by this pilot. The introduction of ENTO and PC Passport would assist in meeting further targets by providing the infrastructure that would allow companies to achieve capacity building and growth. The combination of Core Skills and these other awards would allow the Workforce Development Team not only to provide an excellent service to companies, but also to achieve against the Network targets.

Recommendations

1. Use the distance-learning model for future Core Skills programmes delivered through training providers (at the present time this refers to Access 3 only). It reduces time away from work, ensures relevance of training, builds team working, is non-threatening, improves individual's skills and can be supported cost effectively.
2. Create a document that will explain for employers and trainees what is meant by Core Skills, the levels, achievement measures, timescales and outcomes. Trainees should have the opportunity to put themselves forward to their employers for Core Skills training.
3. Consider the use of PC Passport, which is audited by SQA for the IT element of Core Skills at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher. The IT element of Core Skills has been the area that was seen as the most beneficial by employers and trainees. Core Skills Access 3 is below SVQ level 1.
4. To achieve a sustainable approach consider using the ENTO mini awards to develop training and mentoring skills within organisations and allow them to develop the Core Skills of their own trainees.
5. Core Skills represents an ideal method of developing the skills required for trainees in all industries in the SEFV area. It delivers the skills they require and if the distance e-learning option approach is tied with PC Passport (which will in the near future have the ability to be verified online) then SEFV can deliver a Core Skills programme online and to SQA standards.
6. Carry out Core Skills training with more than one trainee at a time within organisations, this allows them to support each other and develop greater team working skills.
7. Concentrate the efforts in SEFV on sectors of industrial growth or reduction to maximise the return on investment. In the short term this would be: Construction, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Leisure, Tourism, Banking/Financial and Insurance, Public Services, Warehouse/Transport/Distribution.
8. It would also be useful to target liP and Forum companies who have already shown an interest in the training and development of their staff.
9. The Core Skills process and outcomes need to be effectively communicated and timescales clearly defined to ensure employer and trainee commitment for the future.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Core Skills Leaflet

Appendix 2 Individual Learning Plan Traditional

Appendix 3 Individual Learning Plan Distance e-learning

Appendix 1 Core Skills Leaflet

Why Participate?

Core skills training benefits your business in a number of ways including:

- Attainment of business objectives through more effective working practices
- Improved communication and enhanced team working
- Improved quality of customer service
- Improved staff performance and morale
- Expanded operational potential

What Else Should I Know?

Clackmannanshire Training Unit has over twenty years experience in delivering vocational training programmes

The timescale of training is not rigid and course duration can be discussed with the individual employer

In addition to core skills training, Clackmannanshire Training Unit also participates in Skillssetters and Staff Training in the following areas:

- Administration
- Customer Service
- Early Years Care & Education
- Playwork
- Assessor Awards

All are certified to Scottish Vocational Qualification Level 2 and/or 3. For further details of these courses please contact the Training Unit.

Delivery Methods

We will deliver the training to suit the individual employer's needs, whether it is any or all of the core skills elements.

Methods include:

- One to One Delivery
- Training Courses within the Training Centre
- Group Work in the Workplace
- Mentor Support
- Supported Use of IT Packages
- Supported Work Place Vocational Units
- Exit Support to Other Learning Options

For more information please contact

Audrey or Linda at

Clackmannanshire Training and Learning Centre
1 Miller Court, Alloa Business Park
The Whins, ALLOA
FK10 3SA

Tel: (01259) 218005 Fax: (01259) 218746

E-mail: trainingunit@clacks.gov.uk

CORE SKILLS

SOLUTIONS NOW!



Free training in:

- Communication Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Working with Others
- Information Technology Skills
- Number Skills



CLACKMANNANSHIRE
COUNCIL



Scottish Enterprise
South Valley

Communication Skills

This will lead to:

- Improved reading and understanding of instructions and a work process
- Structured writing and organisation of business documents
- Better speaking and listening skills for communication of ideas

Working with Others

Courses will lead to:

- More focused planning which will enable a better approach to work and working with others
- Improved group participation
- Better monitoring and evaluating of group performance and teamwork to identify where improvements can be made

Number Skills

Courses will lead to:

- Improved confidence in working with numbers
- Clearer understanding of tables, charts and plans
- Better presentation of numerical data and information

Problem Solving Skills

Courses will lead to:

- Increased ability to identify problems and possible solutions
- Improved planning and prioritising of tasks
- More effective monitoring and evaluation of work practices to identify what worked well and what could be done differently in the future

Information Technology Skills

Courses will lead to:

- More effective computer use for improved productivity
- Improved use of work place software to enter, edit and print data
- Increased confidence in finding information using ICT

REMEMBER - NO FEES!

There is no cost to either employer or employee for this training

Appendix 2 Individual Learning Plan – Traditional

**Clackmannanshire Training Unit
Core Skills Project**

Individual Learning Plan

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (Home): _____ (Work): _____

Organisation: _____

Occupation: _____

Skill Identified: _____

Course: _____

Dates Attended: _____

Date Completed: _____

Client Signature: _____

Training Officer Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3 Individual Learning Plan - Distance e- learning

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PLAN

Training Programme

Please use BLOCK CAPITALS

NI Number _____ Date of Birth _____
Last Name _____ Title _____
First Name (s) _____
Address _____

Post Code _____

Start Date _____ SVQ/NVQ Title _____
Anticipated End Date _____ SVQ.NVQ Ref. No: _____
Candidate Registration Number _____ SVQ/ Level _____
Awarding/validating Body/Bodies _____
Training Provider/Employer Name _____

Details of Qualification or aim of ITP where it is not the achievement of a VQ

Section 2

Breakdown of SVQ/NVQ Units/Modules by reference number and name. (attached list if preferred):

Mandatory Units/Modules

Optional Units/Modules

What career objectives were identified by the trainee during initial assessment?

How will training be delivered (e.g. day/block release, work-place assessed units, etc.)

Details of induction Training (including Health and Safety Training)

Detail any special training needs and how these needs will be addressed (including preparatory training):

Detail core skills the trainee has obtained and what levels are required for achievement of the outcome detailed in the ITP?

	Held	Not yet attained
Communications		
Numeracy		
Information Technology		
Personal/Interpersonal Skills		
Problem Solving		

Specify how areas for development are to be addressed:

Review of Training

Date planned	Actual Date	Amendments to I.T.P

We, the undersigned, agree to adhere to the contents of this Individual Training Plan

Trainee Signature _____ Date _____

T/Provider

Signature _____ Date _____

Employer

Signature _____ Date _____