



Demand for Skills across the North - ASK

On behalf of the Northern Skills Network Board

The Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge for schools programme (ASK) is funded by the Department for Education and aims to support schools and colleges across England to increase awareness of apprenticeships and T Levels.

The ASK programme is in its 9th year is PAL compliant and committed to supporting the careers landscape with delivery partners across the North engaging with their Careers hubs and CEIAG networks to enhance the delivery of activities and ensure that learners receive impactful and meaningful sessions to support the next steps in their learner journey.

The delivery partners across the North are:

- Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network
- Lancashire Work Based Learning Executive Forum
- Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation
- Yorkshire Learning Providers

As part of the Northern Skills Manifesto, the Northern Skills Network gathered information from each of the delivery partners to share and combine data across the North to highlight the positive impact of ASK and share and disseminate good practice and to identify common barriers.

Data for academic year 22/23:

- Establishments engaged: 377
- Activities: 1,324
- Students: 62,078
- FAA Registrations: 5,753

There are a range of face-to-face activities and some of these can be delivered virtually. The activities are free and include students, teachers and careers advisors, parents and carers.

For Students:

- Awareness assemblies
- Apprenticeship registration and application workshops
- Mock assessment centre workshops
- Mock interview sessions
- Careers Fairs
- 'Career starter' apprenticeship sessions

For Teachers and careers advisors:

- Awareness presentations
- Teacher CPD/inset days

- apprenticeship application information session

For Parents and carers:

- Awareness presentations
- Attendance at parents' events
- Apprenticeship application information session.

There is also a range of learning and development webinars available online via Amazing Apprenticeships.

In the academic year 22/23, members reported a range of positive outcomes in delivering the ASK programme, these include:

- Capacity has grown internally with staffing and being able to onboard additional staffing to support the delivery of ASK
- Continuous effective and strong relationship building across the North
- Feedback from schools, FE colleges and ITPs is strong and is shown by repeat requests for visits and delivery
- Delivery partners reported that they had met KPIs by Easter and all had received additional funding for the remainder of the academic year.
- Stronger relationships have been developed with key stakeholders including the The Careers and Enterprise Company and Careers Hubs to ensure there is less duplication of information in schools.
- Greater demand for the programme than in previous years
- Each partner has developed further ways of communicating with schools and colleges for example, padlets, newsletters and video content to support particular pathways
- Members are posting on Social Media the range of establishments engaged weekly and monthly
- All delivery partners are working with development schools

There are many positives to the delivery of ASK which each of the partners share, good practice is evident, not forgetting that collectively we reached over 62,000 young people across the North.

There are also some challenges that are common with all of the partners in the North. These include:

- Cancellations (often at last minute)
- Lack of content for SEND and Neurodiverse learners
- A shortage of vacancies when Find an Apprenticeship sessions are delivered
- Very low number of disability confident employers
- Parents actively discouraging apprenticeships due to cost of living crisis and changes to family benefits
- Lack of apprentice ambassadors to attend events
- Some difficulties in working with development schools, this is largely due to lack of appropriate resources and some of the information solely focused on intermediate or higher apprenticeships
- Parents and carers lacking knowledge and understanding around career starter apprenticeships and career pathways

The ASK delivery in the North is strong and strengthens the key messaging regarding apprenticeships and technical education options. Since the advent of Provider Access Legislation, the ASK resources have been cross-referenced to the Gatsby Benchmarks. All delivery partners have reported a greater demand for ASK delivery across the North due to its impartiality and free, bespoke support packages.

It is a wholly successful programme that brings together a shared passion to raise the aspirations of young people across the North and to continue to engage with and deliver high quality support and knowledge in the schools and the further education landscape.