

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE: APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

Introduction

As a nationwide deliverer of apprenticeships in HR, Learning & Development and Management, cHRyos HR seeks to continuously work towards an apprenticeship training provision that is driven by the needs of the learner and employer.

Through the development of our expertise in the HR profession, we understand the world of work and specialise in the employment relationship and the management and development of employees. We work closely with our employers to ensure our delivery meets the needs of the employer, the business and the apprentice, to promote employment within our specialist professions.

We look to achieve this by:

- Communicating with, listening and responding to the needs of employers, apprentices and others involved.
- Regularly reviewing our marketing and PR strategy to ensure we are using all appropriate avenues to promote apprenticeships, reaching appropriate sectors, locations and contacts.
- Making use of both digital and face to face communication channels and opportunities to engage with employers nationally in the promotion of apprenticeships.
- Engaging with our national network of employers, employees, and business community organisations in the promotion of apprenticeships across sectors and locations throughout the country.
- Support employers in the promotion of their own apprenticeship opportunities.
- Engage with employers looking to upskill or reskill existing employees in the HR, L&D or Management professions.
- Working with employers from the very start of their engagement with us, so that learning is designed in partnership.
- Understanding employers' objectives for apprenticeship training so that the programme intent is clear and purposeful.
- Offering blended and flexible approaches to apprenticeship training that maximise success.
- Continuously engaging with and supporting employer and apprentice needs throughout the programme of development.
- Continuously managing our relationship with employers so that communication is open, and any concerns are addressed without delay.
- Promoting customer service, quality and compliance always.
- Monitoring and reviewing employer engagement to promote continuous improvement.

Scope of this policy and practices

This policy and practices apply to all apprenticeship training provision offered by cHRyos HR Solutions Ltd.

What this means in practice

Promoting apprenticeships with employers

- Promoting apprenticeships through our website, circulation of a monthly newsletter to employers and active engagement on social media.
- Promoting apprenticeships with employers through Find Apprenticeship Training (FAT).
- Engaging with other national branding and using promotional activities such as Fire it Up.

- Engaging with apprenticeship tenders using our well-established presence.
- Continuing our existing close relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, delivering workshops to employers on topics relating to HR, L&D and Management, and allowing us to promote the benefits of apprenticeships.
- Attending networking events with employers.
- Attending as an exhibitor at careers events and conferences to engage with employers and employees on the benefits of apprenticeships – for example, the CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition, local government Business Showcase exhibition, and Armed Forces careers event supported by the Chartered Management Institute.
- Promoting apprenticeships and apprenticeship training in HR, L&D and Management through our online and face to face communication methods.
- Listing our apprenticeship offering on the Find Apprenticeship Training platform.
- Posting apprenticeship vacancies on behalf of employers on www.findanapprenticeship.service.gov.uk and on our website.
- Supporting employers in the recruitment process for apprentices, including job specifications, advertising, shortlisting, interview and administration support.
- Signposting employers to www.apprenticeships.gov.uk to ensure they receive the most up-to-date information on apprenticeships.
- Visiting potential partner employers to discuss the benefits of apprenticeships, how we can work with them to meet their needs, and the funding available to them.

Working with employers to develop and train apprentices

- Using cHRySOS HR's initial enquiry processes to gather information and explore the employer's needs, provide information, advice and guidance to support the employer in making an informed decision in their recruitment and training of apprentices. Ensuring that the employer understands their commitment to the programme, including supporting 20% off the job learning.
- Working in partnership with employers to provide clear information and discuss objectives and goals.
- Using cHRySOS HR's initial assessment processes to gather information from the apprentice and employer to understand the apprentice's starting point, suitability of the apprentice's role in ensuring successful completion, and prior experience and learning.
- Engaging both the apprentice and employer in undertaking a learning needs analysis for the apprentice.
- Using this information to work with the employer and apprentice to co-create a programme of development that provides the flexibility needed to meet employer and apprentice needs. This will include discussion about the structure and order of delivery, its content and objectives, delivery approaches and timing to meet the needs of the business as a whole and avoid any negative impact on operational issues.
- Offering flexibility in delivery if this is needed to accommodate unexpected challenges within the business or for the individual apprentice.
- Providing financial costings to the employer.
- Co-developing an individual learning plan for the apprentice, setting out the structure, duration and content of the programme – a working document that is regularly reviewed and updated as the apprentice progresses.
- Agreeing contract terms and putting a commitment statement in place so that employers, apprentices and ourselves are clear on expectations and intent.

- Engaging employers in supporting delivery of the programme through coaching, planning opportunities for work-place learning and engaging in assessment of progress in applying knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Briefing delivery staff on employer and apprentice needs so that they are equipped to meet objectives.
- Allocating a skills coach with responsibility for working with the employer and apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship, supporting their needs, monitoring progress towards end point assessment and ensuring that learning opportunities are identified and maximised. The skills coach is a point of continuity and communication for the employer and apprentice throughout the apprenticeship.
- Building regular review meetings between the skills coach, employer and apprentice into the individual learning plan to ensure continuous engagement. Seeking feedback from the employer on their apprentice's progress and workplace activity.
- Ensuring ongoing coaching and mentoring of the apprentice through the skills coach, as well as encouraging apprentices and employers to identify an appropriate mentor for the apprentice. Promoting the benefits of the CIPD/CMI mentoring schemes.
- Encouraging work-based projects as a method of development that will add value to the business.
- Engaging with employers to understand the context of the apprentice's role and ensure that knowledge components are delivered in the right context and language of the workplace.
- Embedding employability skills into the programme.
- Setting out planned training by cHRySOS HR or the employer in a Commitment Statement and individual learning plan. Monitoring and recording training during the apprenticeship using updates to the individual learning plan, an ongoing development log with supporting evidence of learning and a record of off the job learning hours and maintaining registers of attendance.

Managing relationships with employers

- Overall responsibility for managing relationships with employers sits with cHRySOS HR's Managing Director and the supporting Director with responsibility for quality and compliance. Both individuals can act independently and take decisions on matters relating to apprenticeship programmes, individual apprentices and employers.
- cHRySOS HR's Apprenticeship Co-ordinator has a key responsibility to develop and maintain relationships with learning & development and apprenticeship leads within employer organisations, as key players in supporting the employer relationship. **
- Skills coaches also have a responsibility for building and supporting the management of employer relationships within their role, with decision-making authority for any issues at an informal level, and escalation to the Managing Director or Director where required.
- Continual engagement methods employed are:
 - Skills coaches have responsibility for ongoing employer engagement through planned 3-monthly progress reviews with the employer and apprentice, at which they are invited to share their feedback and any concerns.
 - Skills coaches are the point of contact for general questions and communication, along with the Student Services Officer who administers the end to end journey of the apprentice.
 - Telephone and email contact available to employers and apprentices in between these review meetings.
 - System in place for monthly updates to employers where this is agreed.

- Attendance at contract review meetings with employers.
- Provision of monthly progress summary data when requested by employers.
- Employers are issued with the cHRySOS HR Appeals and Complaints Policy and Procedure. They are also made aware at induction that concerns can be raised with the Skills Coach, but that escalation is also available through the Managing Director or Director.
- All appropriate issues and concerns are discussed by the cHRySOS HR team at Quarterly Quality meetings attended by cHRySOS HR team members where action points are planned and monitored.
- More urgently escalated issues are addressed immediately by the Managing Director or Director who discuss the matter with the employer, apprentice, skills coach and others involved as appropriate, give feedback to those involved and take any lessons learned to the Quarterly Quality Meeting and communicate through a bi-monthly Team Update newsletter. Where appropriate, issues are taken to the cHRySOS HR Board for input by the Board of Governance.
- Feedback on actions arising from any issues raised are communicated back to the relevant employer.
- All team members, including tutors and support staff are aware they can escalate issues to the Managing Director or Director at any time.

Monitoring and improving employer engagements

Several methods are used to monitor and improve engagement with employers:

- Employer engagement monitored through the Board of Governance with quarterly reporting to the Board
- Employer engagement activity monitored monthly through reporting by skills coaches.
- Employers invited to give feedback on the programme at 3-month review meetings.
- ESFA/OFSTED Employer Satisfaction questionnaires and a cHRySOS HR feedback questionnaire used to gather feedback.
- Details of complaints are recorded so that trends can be analysed and identified.
- Details of questions frequently asked by employers are recorded so that trends can be analysed and identified.
- Employer feedback, complaints and frequently asked questions data is analysed and discussed by the team at Quarterly Quality Meetings. Action plans to address any issues and ensure continuous improvement in employer engagement are built into the Quality Improvement Plan and Self-Assessment processes.
- Quality assurance observation activity includes observing skills coaches during review meetings and feedback includes the quality of engagement with the employer.
- Employer engagement resources including the cHRySOS HR website and induction and communication processes are reviewed annually to identify points for improvement. This activity is informed by the employer feedback and complaints and frequently asked questions data.
- Feedback given to employers on action taken to address feedback or complaints. Improvement is then monitored through the next point of feedback from the employer.

Review of this policy

This policy and practices will be reviewed annually.

*(** Note to ESFA – Apprenticeship Co-ordinator is a new role established within cHRySOS HR to strengthen and support our provision).*