

## Staying Power!

[An investigation into the reasons and motives for non-completion of Apprenticeship Programmes]

# *Bridgwater College*



Bridgwater College works with approx:

- 400 apprentices
- 200 employers
- 12 programme areas

across the South West.

## What are Apprenticeships?

- 16 to 24 year olds
- Level 2 and Level 3
- Apprenticeship Framework:
  - NVQ
  - Technical Certificate
  - Key Skills

How are Apprenticeships different from other learning programmes?

1. Full-time employment
2. Workplace learning and assessment
3. Private Training Providers
4. 25% funding on achievements
5. No Framework, no achievement!

How do Apprenticeships compare to other learning programmes?

- UK A-level achievements above 92%
- European apprenticeship achievements around 75%
- UK Framework achievements less than 60%

The **good** news: UK Framework achievements are increasing

The **bad** news: as achievement increases so retention becomes more critical!

Research aim was to identify:

- why learners leave
- how non-completion might be reduced

## Research Methodology

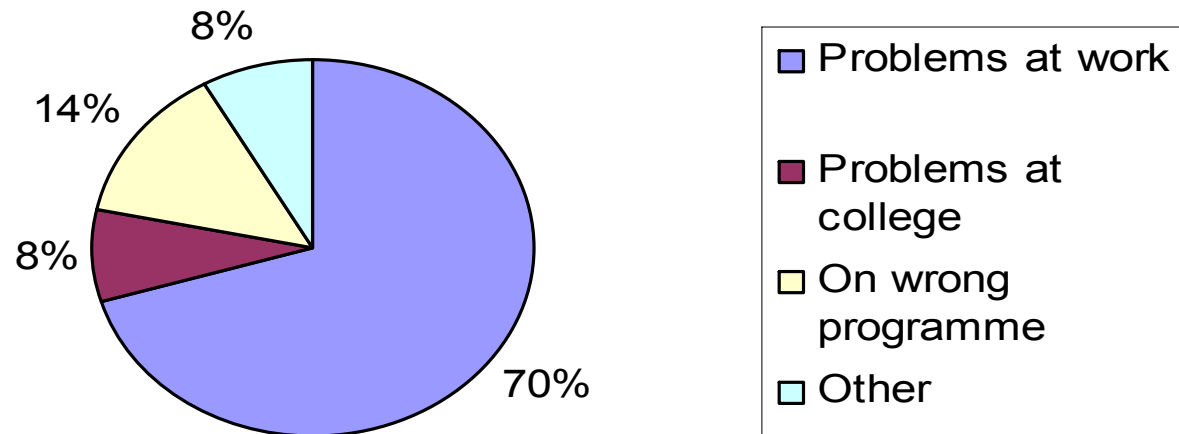
- Quantitative data: structured questionnaire  
[on-programme survey - apprentices, college staff and employers]
- Qualitative data: a semi-structured questionnaire  
[early leaver survey]

## Research Findings:

### Early Leaver Survey

Majority of learners who dropped out from their apprenticeship reported doing so because they were experiencing **problems at work.**

## Main Reasons for Leaving the Apprenticeship Programme early



## Problems at work included:

- 'Boring work'
- Redundancy
- 'Not enough pay'
- 'I didn't get on with colleagues/employer'

## On-Programme Surveys:

Key issues for apprentices.....

- 'control over work activities'
- 'enjoyable and challenging work'
- 'recognition'

*'students will put up with a lot,  
if the boss gives them a pat on  
the back every so often'*

More issues for apprentices.....

- 'workplace friendships'
- 'job security'
- 'pay'

Employer and College staff feedback indicates they often underestimate:

- learner determination to do well
- the importance of workplace friendships

*'Existing staff groups are tightly knit,  
making it difficult for young apprentices  
to feel part of the team''*

And don't always appreciate learner:

- willingness to take on responsibility
- desire to attempt new tasks

## Recommendations:

- Encourage larger firms to appoint workplace mentors
- Prompt employer discussion on learner needs

and .....

- Help employers plan challenging and interesting workplace tasks/activities
- Manage learner expectations

*'Apprentices sometimes expect to be spraying complicated designs on customised cars all day; it can come as a bit of a shock when they are only allowed to clean up the workshop!'*

## What happened next?

- Comparison of learner/ employer learning styles
- 'Preparation for work' induction, at college

With hindsight.....

- Response rates
- Representative sampling

Further research?

Widen research population to include:

- Apprenticeship programmes with higher female participation rates?
- Other WBL providers?