



Vocational Training Services Care Sector Limited

Learner Handbook

Table of Contents

1	Letter from the Director
2	A Brief History
3	Contact Details
4	The Apprenticeship Programme
5	Delivery of The Curriculum
9	Introduction Pack
10	Off-The-Job Training
10	Mental Health and Well-being
11	Safeguarding
12	Complaint Procedure

Dear Learner,

Welcome aboard!

We are delighted that you have chosen Vocational Training Services to help you achieve your apprenticeship qualification.

Our mission is to provide you with high quality training and assessment throughout your apprenticeship course. This commitment is underpinned by our belief that equality of opportunity encourages participation and is essential to your success, as well as the quality of our training.

We pride ourselves on offering the highest quality support and opportunity to our apprentices. We, of course, expect the highest standards of commitment from our learners, and in return we will provide a challenging and stimulating environment, a friendly workforce and good learning opportunities.

We appreciate that there will be certain documents to complete and systems to use that may not always be straightforward at first. Therefore, we have produced this handbook which contains lots of information about how your apprenticeship course will work, including an explanation of off-the-job training, and how the curriculum will be delivered.

Your tutor will have explained how the programme will be run, which will be individual to you, but if you have any queries through your programme, please ask your tutor or contact a member of staff at our Westcliff office on 01702 353557.

On behalf of all the staff here, may I take this opportunity to once more welcome you to VTS and wish you every success with your programme.

Best wishes

Emma Henigan
Managing Director
emmahenigan@vts.ac.uk

A BRIEF HISTORY

To help you understand where we have come from, below is a brief history of VTS.

VTS was established in May 1994 and has always offered Health & Social Care and Children and Young People’s Care apprenticeships. We have tutors working across Essex to help individuals achieve apprenticeships, with a mixture of ‘on-the-job’ and ‘off-the-job’ training in their workplaces.

In recent years we have expanded our provision and in addition to the above, we now offer apprenticeships in Early Years Education, Adult Social Care, Healthcare Support Services, Management, and Teaching Assistant, all at various levels ranging from level 2 to level 5.

VTS operates from 2 sites; the head office/training centre is situated in Westcliff-on-Sea and a further training centre is located in Colchester. The Westcliff-on-Sea office is continuously manned through office hours, and the Colchester office is used for testing and 1:1 learning sessions only.

OUR TEAM



Our team of Tutors and Administrators with our Managing Director Emma Henigan (Centre left) at our Westcliff Office in Essex.

CONTACT DETAILS

Vocational Training Services
Chalkwell Lawns
648-656 London Road
Westcliff on Sea
Essex
SS0 9HR

01702 353557

Office Opening Hours
09.00-17.00 Monday to Friday

The Westcliff office is open on a full-time basis, so please direct any communication, verbal or written to there in the first instance.

The Colchester Office is available to be used for testing and 1:1 learning sessions only.

Vocational Training Services
Wellington House
90-92 Butt Road
Colchester
Essex
CO3 3DA

THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

To help you understand your apprenticeship programme, below is some brief information:

Structure of an apprenticeship Standard

An apprenticeship standard is a job specific qualification designed by a group of employers with your industry experience. All apprenticeships will have a set of learning outcomes laid out clearly in a standard document supported by a detailed assessment plan.

Apprenticeships may or may not include formal industry qualifications and you will need to refer to the standard document for full details of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that will be acquired during the apprenticeship course. At the end of your planned period of learning you will undergo a formal independent End Point Assessment (EPA) to judge whether or not you have achieved all the learning outcomes and are occupationally competent.

The role of the Tutor (QA) and Internal Verifier (IQA)

Your tutor will meet with you regularly, usually during your working day either in your workplace or via video calling, to provide you with learning activities and guidance; you will also be observed and assessed for competence.

The internal verifier will check the tutor has met required standards by verifying your work on a regular basis.

How to contact VTS, the Tutor and Internal Verifier

Your tutor will provide you with their contact details and these details will be within your Training Plan, which will be sent to you within the first few weeks. If you need to contact VTS, or a member of staff please contact the Westcliff office on 01702 353557.

The role of the awarding body in formal qualifications and certification of achievements

The awarding body sets the standards you work towards according to the occupational standards. Timescales can vary for receiving your certificates depending on the workload of the relevant Sector Skills Council and the awarding body.

An External Quality Assurance (EQA) Verifier

The External Verifier is a representative of the awarding body who makes regular visits to the centre (i.e. VTS) to ensure the required standards are being met as well as addressing learner needs.

The benefits of apprenticeship training

To show job skills, acquire knowledge and gain the transferable behaviours required in all areas of employment. The apprenticeship can also increase your chances of progressing and upskilling in your sector.

DELIVERY OF THE CURRICULUM

During enrolment, it will be established how you will build a portfolio of evidence; our default method is via the e-learning cloud-based platform 'Learning Assistant'.

You will follow a study plan given to you at enrolment which will explain the topics covered each month and will also include the off-the-job activities which will need to be carried out (see page 10). The curriculum has been designed to cover all the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for successful completion of your apprenticeship. The curriculum has been broken down into lesson plans which you will discuss at your regular learning sessions with your tutor, and these plans will be individualised to suit you. The study plan will also include the number of hours that need to be spent each month on the off-the-job training.

You will be given an observation plan at enrolment which will explain the activities we will need to observe throughout your programme. Your tutor will discuss the off-the-job activities with you and the named contact in your workplace and will confirm each month that these have taken place. You will also have a log in to your e-portfolio where the off-the-job hours are logged and will need to be acknowledged by yourself and your workplace. This includes all the activities and hours undertaken the previous month.

You will be visited monthly for approximately 1 hour unless additional support is required, in which case it may be more frequently. These meetings will usually happen in your workplace but may also be arranged at one of our offices if appropriate. During the visit, your tutor will deliver learning for the next unit and will give you a lesson plan detailing all the tasks required for that month. This can include answering questions, gathering work products, pre planning of verbal questioning or professional discussion and planning observations.

The plan for your apprenticeship will also include functional skills (mathematics and/or English) tasks to be carried out, if necessary, plus the off-the-job tasks you need to complete that month and any tasks which work towards your EPA. Functional skills (mathematics and/or English) are embedded into our curriculums (either at level 1 or 2 depending on the apprenticeship), however not all apprentices will need this, it will depend on your prior qualifications. Our tutors will use standard lesson plans but during the visit these will be adapted to ensure they meet your individual needs and circumstances.

The importance of keeping to agreed deadlines

Your apprenticeship funding has a time limit, and the tutor has planned your programme to support you to get the best out of your learning. Deadlines for work to be completed will be agreed between you and your tutor.

Keeping appointments and contacting the tutor about cancellations

It is very important to make the most of your learning sessions with your tutor. The best way to keep motivated and on top of your workload is to complete tasks and work as set by your tutor and keep to appointments. Remember that your tutor is there to help and support you. If you are unable to keep your appointments, please give your tutor as much notice as possible.

Enrichment module

Throughout your course, you will complete an enrichment module. You will have your tutor's guidance and support to complete the tasks set.

We are here to support and guide you to complete your apprenticeship, however, it is also important to us that we equip you with the skills and knowledge to support you in the wider concept of well-being and at work.

The enrichment module will include:

Careers

Throughout the course, you will be asked to reflect on your career goals and qualifications. Your tutor will support you to reflect on these and to complete tasks which will identify if these have changed, and if the apprenticeship is helping you to reach your goals.

Maths and English Life Skills

These skills are important at work but also in everyday life; it can be surprising how many times in our lives we draw upon Maths and English skills. Every month, your tutor will support you to develop key Maths and English skills which can be used at work and at home.

Personal Safety

It is important to us that you understand how to keep yourself safe. You will watch key videos and complete relevant tasks to further support your understanding in the key areas. These are: Online Safety, Sexual and Criminal Exploitation, Radicalisation, and Healthy Relationships. This topic will also include and promote the fundamental British Values of: Democracy, The Rule of Law, Individual liberty, and Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Employability

Throughout your course, you will be guided and supported on how to write a CV and cover letter, professional conduct in the workplace, and your rights as an employee.

Workplace support and involvement

Your employer is there to support you throughout your apprenticeship; the knowledge and experience you will gain in the workplace is invaluable. Remember that your colleagues may also be able to support you with providing witness statements or mentoring you through the programme.

Progress Reviews

A formal progress review between yourself and your tutor will be conducted every 12 weeks where your progress will be evaluated, and new targets will be set. Your tutor will award you a RAG (red, amber, green) rating according to whether or not you are progressing in accordance with your training plan. The tutor will confirm that you are meeting the required deadlines and if there is any cause for concern, then measures can be put in place for future support and an action plan can be devised if necessary. Your 'Learning Assistant' platform can show you what your actual progress is against expected. The progress reviews will be prearranged, and your employer's attendance would be greatly appreciated.

End Point Assessment

Once the practical teaching period has ended, you will then be ready for the EPA process to go ahead. This is known as 'gateway'.

In order for you to proceed to the assessments, the following will need to have been achieved:

- The qualification needs to have been completed and been through our internal IQA process.
- Mathematics and/or English functional skills (if included in the curriculum) need to have been achieved and certificated. If the functional skills have not been embedded into the course, we will need to have the certificates for your previously existing mathematics and English accredited qualifications.
- Any further industry specific workplace requirements.
- A completed showcase portfolio.
- A completed gateway declaration signed by yourself, your employer, and by us.

Agreed Break in Learning

It is not always possible for a learner to complete their apprenticeship in a single attempt. Circumstances or situations can occur that cause you to take a break from learning whilst still having the full intention of continuing and completing your programme. You can take a break from learning of up to 6 months if you have an accident, illness or holiday requiring a prolonged time off work. If you are going on maternity leave, you can take a break from learning throughout your maternity entitlement. Please discuss this with your tutor if you feel this is appropriate to you.

Mandatory Units

If you are studying a formal, industry specific qualification, these units must be completed and cover core areas of your job role.

Optional Units

If your apprenticeship course includes optional units, they should be selected based on your particular job role. Your tutor will discuss these units with you shortly after your enrolment, and agree the best ones to suit your role.

How the programme is funded

Your apprenticeship will be funded by the government and your employer; therefore, you should not be asked to contribute financially in any way towards your course.

How to present and maintain a portfolio

You will build and maintain your portfolio of evidence via our electronic platform – ‘Learning Assistant’. We use a variety of ways to collect evidence including observation, questioning, and having a professional discussion. You can produce your own resources, complete independent research and written work, and gain expert witness testimonies from your employer.

Note: You will be encouraged to carry out your own research for your written assignments. You may utilise all sources available to you, but please guard against ‘copy and pasting’ from internet sources. This practice is not acceptable to your awarding body, and we will use specialised software in order to detect and highlight any such occurrences. Any portfolio evidence produced in this way will not be acceptable as it is deemed as plagiarism and will have to be repeated.

Additional Learning Support

The more we know, the more we can support you with making your programme suit your individual needs. In some circumstances, we can offer you additional learning support in order to overcome any barriers to learning you may have. Please do not worry about this if your tutor suggests it; we want you to get the best out of your apprenticeship and sometimes a little extra help may be useful.

This could be a learning or physical disability, a health condition, or socio/economic factors. Whatever it is we can help by agreeing some reasonable adjustments we can make for you alone, to specifically address your circumstances. Your tutor can provide more information, so please don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Change of Employer

Your apprenticeship is a three-way agreement between yourself, your employer and us as your training provider. Each of the three parties agree at the outset to uphold certain responsibilities and indicate this by signing the various documents at the time of enrolment. Changing your employer part way through your apprenticeship is not always a straightforward process and is sometimes not possible at all. We would urge you to try wherever possible to complete your training before you consider moving jobs. If you find yourself contemplating a move – please speak to your tutor before you do anything to ensure that you understand any potential implications regarding your apprenticeship.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

At VTS, we aim to provide an inclusive environment where we celebrate diversity and ensure equality of opportunity for everyone, regardless of their background, gender, age, culture, disability, sexual orientation, political beliefs or marital status. You can read our approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion by taking a look at the policy on our website.

Learning facilities available

At both our Westcliff and Colchester offices, we may be able to offer quiet study areas and use of resources and computers to enable you to complete your apprenticeship course. If you are interested in using any of these facilities, please contact your tutor.

Withdrawal from programme

We will support you as much as possible to help you achieve your apprenticeship. If you are no longer making any progress against your training plan, you may not be able to complete your apprenticeship.

We will consider you to have withdrawn from the programme if:

- You have been unable to contact and as a result, fall too far behind in your course and will therefore be unable to continue the programme.
- If you have changed to a new employer who is not able and/or willing to support you throughout the remainder of your apprenticeship course.

If this happens, we will write or email to confirm that you have been withdrawn from the programme.

INTRODUCTION PACK

Shortly after the enrolment process, your tutor will give you an introduction pack containing lots of useful information on how to make the most out of your apprenticeship course.

The introduction pack will include guidance on how to set out your written work and how to reference correctly, as well as some common mistakes that apprentices make. The introduction pack also contains screenshots of the process to upload your work to the Learning Assistant platform, how to acknowledge each visit with your tutor, and how to view your lesson plans. We ask you to complete these acknowledgements as they have replaced wet signatures, which we no longer collect.

OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for any apprenticeship and is embedded within your apprenticeship. Off-the-job training involves the teaching of new knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are directly relevant to the apprenticeship course. This training will be carried out during your normal (contracted) working hours but must be separate to your normal job role. Time spent exclusively on studying English &/or maths is not included in off-the-job training.

Off-the-job training activities are fully integrated into our curriculums and will be included within each lesson plan throughout your apprenticeship. We can also adapt the lesson plans to suit your individual circumstances, as well as those of your employer. The lesson plans will explain how the off-the-job activities relate to the requirements of the apprenticeship.

Note: Your off-the-job training will be discussed, planned and agreed between you, your employer and your tutor, and recorded on your study plan/lesson plans. Throughout your apprenticeship, you and your employer will need to confirm that the activities are taking place in accordance with the plans. Your tutor will explain this in more detail, show you how to record this and explain what will happen if, for any reason, you are unable to keep to the plan.

For a full explanation of the off-the-job hours required for your apprenticeship, and how these will be achieved, please refer to your individual training plan.

Your tutor will confirm with you each month that the required off-the-job training has taken place. You will also be asked to acknowledge these activities and hours spent training each month via the Learning Assistant portal. This is very important for validity, as it replaces 'wet signatures' which we no longer use.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

During the monthly lessons, your tutor will consider your health and well-being as this is the foundation of your ability to study, focus and learn.

If you do have any health or well-being concerns, your tutor will provide their full support by putting personalised measures and strategies in place to help you throughout your course.

Should your tutor feel that more support is needed, they may offer to refer you to our Mental Health Support Officer, Jade Hutchinson.

SAFEGUARDING

Your safety and well-being are important to us, as well as ensuring that you are aware of the process to report any concerns that you may have. This process will be explained to you at enrolment and the enrichment module includes a key topic area dedicated to your personal safety.

All the VTS tutors are fully DBS checked and undertake an in-depth and up-to-date induction training session to identify apprentices who could be vulnerable, including potential signs of safeguarding issues. All tutors have yearly updated training, and this includes PREVENT.

Our detailed safeguarding policy can be found on our website:

[Safeguarding - VTS - Vocational Training Services Care Sector Ltd](#)

Should you feel concerned, please contact:

Rosie Hamilton (Designated Safeguarding Lead) - rosiehamilton@vts.ac.uk

Jade Hutchinson (Designated Safeguarding Officer) - jadehutchinson@vts.ac.uk

Charlotte Bunce (Designated Safeguarding Officer) - charlottebunce@vts.ac.uk

Or email safeguardingconcerns@vts.ac.uk

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

How to make a complaint

We have a complaints process which is available on our website at www.vts.ac.uk. If your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, ultimately you are entitled to contact the ESFA via the apprenticeship helpline on 08000 150600.

Policies and Procedures

We have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures which are constantly updated due to legislation changes.

You can find the most up-to-date versions of these documents on our website <http://www.vts.ac.uk> This includes:

- Appeals procedure
- Customer complaints
- Safeguarding & Prevent Duty
- Confidentiality
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Information, advice & guidance
- British Values & Personal Development
- Health & Safety
- Manual handling responsibilities for employers & employees
- Privacy & Data Protection

If you would like paper versions of any of these documents, please ask your tutor, or alternatively contact the Westcliff Office.

Useful links & Numbers

At times we can all find ourselves in need of support or advice and it isn't always obvious where to go for help. We have compiled a list of useful numbers and links which you can find on our website at www.vts.ac.uk