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Enhancing employment outcomes for learners with SEND: Leeds Job Coach Forum

(FE) ETF Employer Spokes Events: Employer Spokes foster partnerships between FE providers and employers that evidence best practice in meaningful employment for people with SEND.

Introduction

Luminate Education Group is a leading education provider in the Leeds City Region, supporting over 25,000 students. We prioritise the needs of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), providing personalised support and opportunities.

The group's ethos is to foster partnerships between individuals, communities, and businesses to create a thriving region. We work closely with organisations like Leeds City Council to promote inclusivity in the workplace.

This case study aims to demonstrate the positive impact of the Leeds Job Coach Forum on enhancing the employment outcomes for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Leeds. The forum, which currently comprises 37 members, provides a platform for professional development, knowledge sharing, and collaborative support. Through regular meetings, training sessions, and community visits, the forum empowers Job Coaches with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support learners into future employment.

Implementation

The Leeds Job Coach Forum was started to foster a collaborative environment for Job Coaches across the city. By bringing together professionals in this unique and challenging role, we aimed to facilitate the sharing of best practices, address common challenges, and provide mutual support.

Since it started, the forum has experienced significant growth, expanding from an initial 10 members to 37, demonstrating a clear and increasing demand for this type of professional network.

The forum's activities have encompassed a diverse range of topics, including specialised training sessions and focused discussions on key issues such as employer engagement. This approach has provided valuable opportunities for Job Coaches to enhance their skills, address specific challenges, and collectively explore innovative solutions.

Outcomes

Participant feedback was collected to assess the impact of the training. This involved gathering data on planned implementation of learned skills, perceived value of the forum for professional development, confidence in applying new skills, and likelihood of sharing knowledge with colleagues. Participant satisfaction and recommendation of the training were also measured. The training demonstrated a significant positive impact across multiple areas.

Outcomes (continued)

The forum has demonstrated a significant positive impact across multiple areas. All participants intend to use the acquired knowledge and skills within one month, ensuring swift integration into practical work scenarios. Every participant recognised the training's value for their professional growth, highlighting its relevance to long-term career development. A 100% confidence rate in applying the learned skills and a 100% intention to implement them within a month indicates a strong and immediate impact.

All participants believe the training will improve their performance, professional development, and ability to support neurodiverse individuals. A significant majority of participants plan to share their learnings with colleagues, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

Impact and Next Steps

The forum has significantly improved the skills and knowledge of Job Coaches within Leeds. By facilitating peer-to-peer learning and providing access to expert speakers, the forum has empowered Job Coaches with best practices, innovative strategies, and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by learners with SEND. We have received fantastic feedback from Job Coaches;

"The Job Coach forum has been an essential resource, allowing me to connect with others and learn from their experiences. It provides guidance and offers valuable insights from those with more experience and knowledge, helping me navigate both positive and challenging situations."

Improved support for learners with SEND by enhancing Job Coaches knowledge this has directly translated into improved support for learners with SEND. For example, through specific training the forum has recently produced and is developing an 'Unwritten Rules' template, to support students in the workplace to navigate both formal and informal expectations and enhance job performance. When setting up a new employer this template will benefit Job Coaches in being able to prepare learners for their placement.

The forum has fostered strong collaborative relationships among Job Coaches, key stakeholders including Leeds City Council, and external organisations. These partnerships have expanded support networks for learners and facilitated the sharing of resources and expertise.

Moving forward, the forum will aim to continue to grow its membership and expand its reach to include a wider range of professionals involved in supporting learners with SEND. Develop and deliver specialised training addressing specific needs identified by Job Coaches, such as digital skills and inclusive recruitment practices.

The forum will actively engage in raising awareness of its activities and the valuable role it plays in supporting learners with SEND among key stakeholders. This will include targeted outreach efforts to employers, education providers, and policymakers.

Key Learning

The Leeds Job Coach Forum enhances the support for learners with SEND. By fostering collaboration, providing professional development, and building strong partnerships, the forum empowers Job Coaches, improves outcomes for learners, and advocates for inclusive employment practices. Key learnings emphasise the importance of collaboration, continuous professional development, strong partnerships, data-driven approaches, and advocacy for systemic change. Recommendations for good practice include replicating the model in other regions, expanding the forum's reach, and advocating for systemic change to create a more inclusive employment for individuals with SEND.

