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Case study: Lifetime Training



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Lifetime Training is the UK's largest apprenticeship training provider, operating across five sectors with approximately 17,000 learners currently on programme. Lifetime's strategic vision is to build on its position as market leader, working with key partners across the Hospitality, Retail, Care, Digital and Management Services sectors.

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Lifetime selected Aptem in March 2021, following a year-long procurement process. This case study explores how the successful switch to Aptem is enabling Lifetime to continue to put learners at the heart of the organisation, while also realising productivity improvements across the business. Achieving this balance helps focus resources on the right places to drive quality in terms of:

- **Learner experience and achievement**
- **Employer engagement**
- **Apprenticeship take-up and impact**



17,000

Lifetime operates across five sectors with approximately 17,000 learners currently on programme.

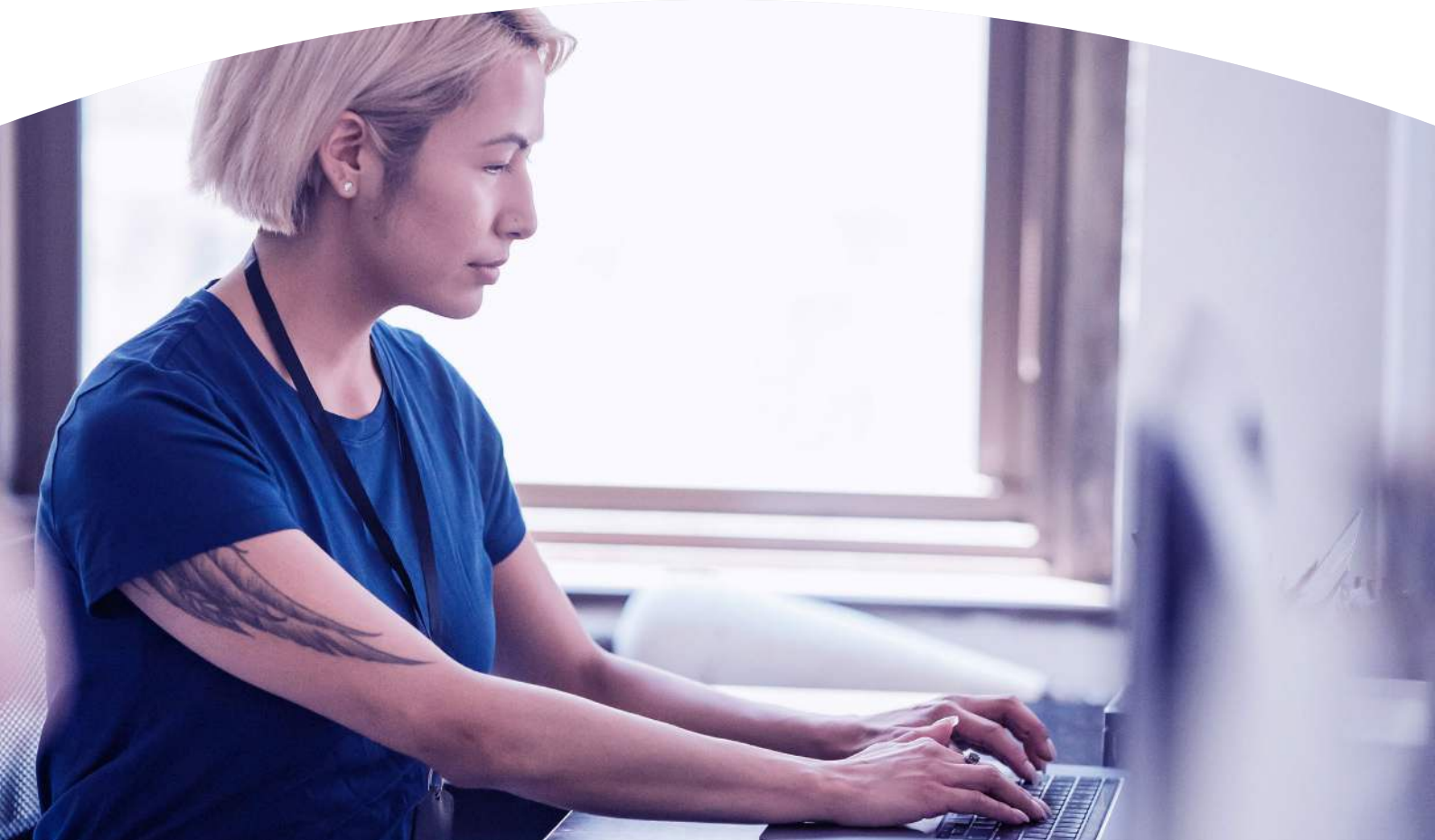
Commercial viability as a driver for learner success

Dom Wilkinson, Product Owner at Lifetime, says of the current sector landscape, *"As any provider will know, it's complicated to operate within apprenticeship- and work-based learning, and the margins are very, very tight. It's vitally important for us to work towards operational efficiency so that we free up our people to concentrate on service delivery to learners and employers.*

"We are very focused on making sure that what matters is the learner: that they have a great experience and walk away with tangible skills that are going to benefit them in the workplace. Otherwise, you're number-crunching for no reason. The commercial consideration of capitalising on our investment in Aptem goes hand in hand with our relentless focus on customer experience."

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Dom Wilkinson, Product Owner, Lifetime Training



Transforming the learner journey

How it worked prior to procuring Aptem

One of the challenges the Lifetime Training team faced pre-Aptem was the use of multiple systems:

There was one system for the data capture required for the Individualised Learning Record (ILR) – the learner's postal address, contact details, working pattern etc.

Coaches would then use a different portfolio system that "was designed for frameworks and had been updated layer upon layer to bring it in line with standards; becoming very complex."

Learners themselves would use another system to access their curriculum content.

Coaches would use a further system to access their teaching support materials.

Dom reflects, "*before you know it, you've got five or six different login credentials and systems that the operations team, learners and coaches had to navigate, which created a confusing learner journey and operational inefficiency.*"

How it works with Aptem

The current experience for Lifetime apprentices, by contrast, is more seamless as learners now need to use only one system.

"I cannot stress enough how impactful it's been pushing everything into Aptem and making it a one-stop shop, particularly for the learner." Dom Wilkinson

1. **Log into Aptem**
2. **Complete the onboarding**
3. **Find your learning content**
4. **Contact and engage with your coach**
5. **Track your progress**
6. **Move through Gateway and into EPA**

Aptem has had a massive impact on the experience of our apprentices. Our learners are telling us that it is easy to use, great to track their progress and full of all the information they need.

Rebecca Iles, Customer Experience Analyst, Lifetime Training

Reworking the delivery model

How it worked prior to procuring Aptem

Lifetime's delivery model prior to Aptem looked very different to how it does today. It was a visit-based model, following the mantra of 'every learner, every month'. Dom acknowledges this was a very ambitious target to hit and that the pandemic caused enormous upheaval for the sectors in which they were operating. He explains, *"In reality, we were achieving a visit every six to seven weeks and were in the scoping and development stage for Aptem during Covid, already looking to adjust our model."*

The challenges of a visit-based approach included:

- Having to fit everything into one meeting, from extensive admin and safeguarding to delivering teaching and checking on progress. The meeting was also the only opportunity to engage with the line manager.
- A lack of data to drive quality improvement. Aside from quality checks, the main data point was when the visit happened, with little further qualitative or quantitative data to give deeper insight.

How it works with Aptem

Part of the Aptem project was the objective of 'letting the coach actually coach'; removing as much admin as possible and enabling them to do what they do best – teach. Aptem functionality means a more systematic and consistent approach, with a far greater opportunity for meaningful interactions and full visibility over how those interactions are impacting progress.

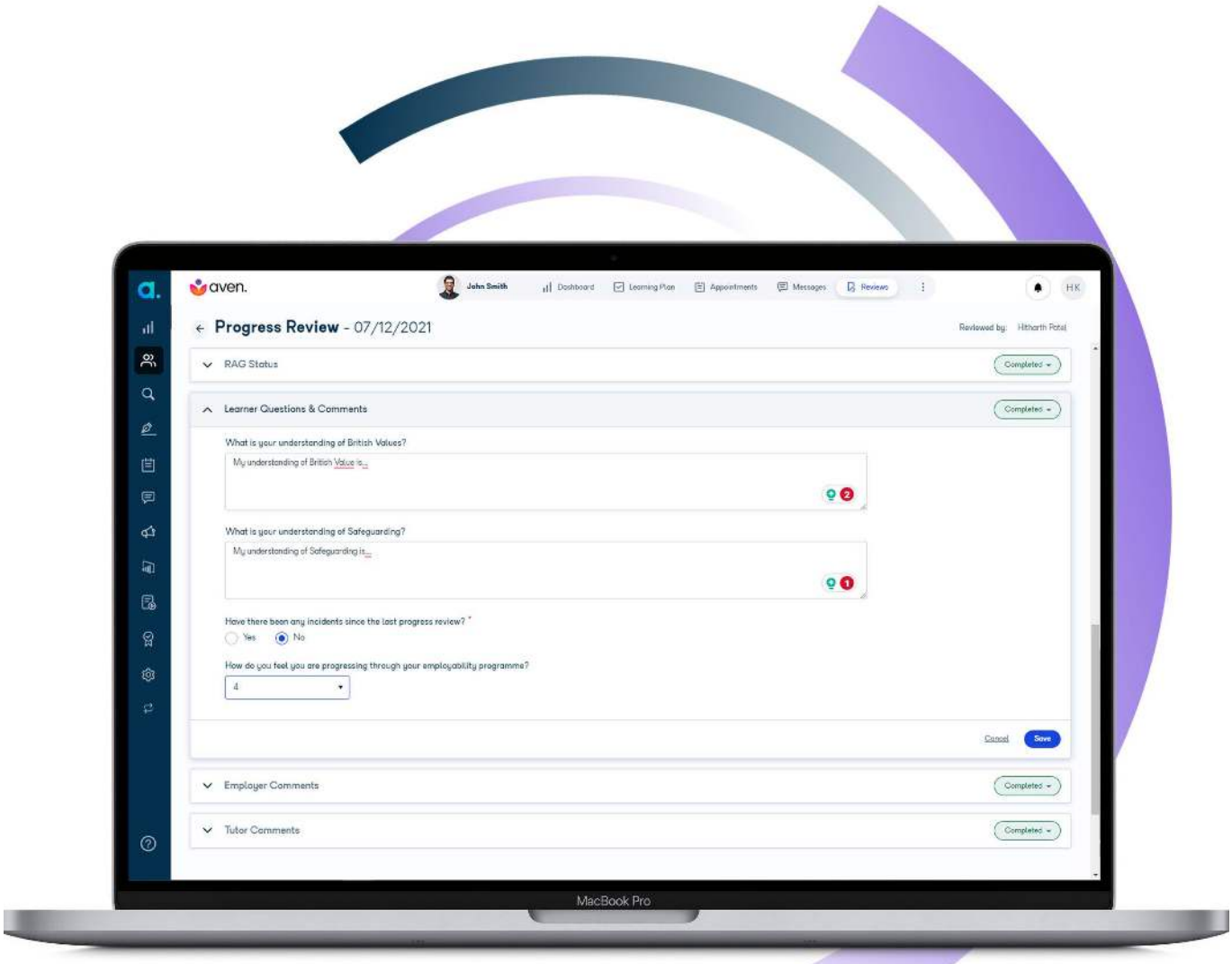
Using Aptem's customisable reviews and other key functionality, coaches are now able to break a 'visit' down into more targeted meetings. A typical learner now sees the following touch points:

- Lifetime's 'Meet your Coach' introductory meeting.
- Monthly progress review, tracking progress using Aptem's Skills Radar tool and the learning coach assessments of learner progress.
- Regular workshops and learning delivery – a blend of in-person and online learning, using Aptem's SCORM asset functionality.
- Monthly check on impact of Additional Learning Support, where relevant.
- Monthly check on Functional Skills progress, where relevant.
- Quarterly tripartite review with coach, learner and line manager.
- EPA preparation and subsequent assessment dates and results.

Key Aptem functionality for coaches

Customisable reviews

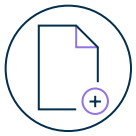
With the customisable reviews, Lifetime is able to split a 'visit' into six or seven different review types, so the purpose and outcome of each interaction is clear and documented. In practice, this means coaches can spend a full two hours on teaching, for example, rather than combining admin and other tasks. Where components such as Safeguarding and Prevent are required, Aptem allows them to quickly identify any further support needs and put steps in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their learners.





Automation trackers

Aptem's automation trackers mean that much of the admin heavy lifting is taken care of by the system. Trackers offer a key link between Lifetime's operational, central compliance and quality teams, to ensure learners get the best experience with minimal administrative delays.



Learning Plan

Embedding the learning content into the Learning Plan means the coaches and operational team have full access to what learning has taken place, how the learner has engaged, and how they are evidencing the application of learning.



Employer reporting

Impactful, granular detail of where learners are up to is important for Lifetime's employer partners, accessible through the Aptem employer dashboard. This sophisticated approach appeals to many of Lifetime's employer partners, especially those in the public sector.



Tutor dashboard

The team is now well placed to use the Aptem dashboards to identify areas of concern and quickly and efficiently apply strategies for intervention to keep learners on track.



There is great visibility of my learner caseload and the progress each learner is making, as well as the areas I need to focus on, enabling me to adapt my support to suit the individual.

Lifetime coach

Managing the change project

"When you are the market leader and have an organisation with so many thousands of learners, employer partners and staff, a major system change like the transition to Aptem is, of course, significant," explains Dom. *"Aptem has always been very supportive of Lifetime in our launch and adoption of the new system. It has been a rollercoaster at times, but the project has been a success. Despite two sets of funding rule changes, an Ofsted inspection and leadership changes, we made it. We got it over the line. I'm proud of everyone involved."*

The Lifetime team attributes success to a number of factors:

- A partnership approach with the Aptem team, comprising a dedicated Project Manager, a highly experienced Implementation Consultant and a Customer Success Manager that will stay with Lifetime throughout.
- Sheer determination and hard work from everyone involved. For a period of time, the team was operating on dual systems as part of the transition, which *"was hard work and called for resilience and commitment"*. Just short of 20,000 learners have now been transferred onto the Aptem system.
- Recognition that not everyone moves at the same pace along the change curve.
- A commitment to careful monitoring of the ongoing culture change that runs alongside a major system change. This, for Lifetime, meant attention to seemingly small things such as not using the word 'visit' as it doesn't accurately describe the purpose of the interaction.
- Balance between the new way of working and not losing sight of the 'gems' that make up the DNA of the organisation. *"While we love Aptem's ability to do remote sessions and facilitate remote learning, we want to retain the impact of face-to-face interaction and how that makes our learners feel."*

Aptem has always been very supportive of Lifetime in our launch and adoption of the new system.

Dom Wilkinson, Product Owner, Lifetime Training

Dom shares an interesting observation that at first, the introduction of Aptem appeared to some coaches to involve more and not less admin. "*This wasn't the case*," explains Dom, "*but when your system change project coincides with DfE rule changes, it seems like there is more to do. Despite the timing of these changes and initial perceptions, feedback from our coaches is now almost universally positive, positioning us well to achieve our future goals and objectives.*"

One Lifetime coach shares her experience. "*There is great visibility of my learner caseload and the progress each learner is making, as well as the areas I need to focus on, enabling me to adapt my support to suit the individual. My learners pick up how to use it quickly and tend to find it easy to navigate through their learning plan. Being able to clearly see their progress helps keep them engaged and motivated. I also find Aptem useful to use when planning and conducting teaching and learning sessions; as a support or visual aid for the learner as well as easily being able to adapt the content for different learning styles when required.*"

Being able to clearly see their progress helps keep learners engaged and motivated.

Lifetime coach



High-impact Aptem functionality for scaled delivery

The team is delighted with the functionality that Aptem already offers and appreciates visibility over what's to come in the roadmap. Here they highlight some of the key features that enable them to deliver at such scale.



Reporting and data

"We use OData for pretty much everything and have designed our own Power BI suite using OData. This is so important for an organisation of our size. We currently deliver 56 apprenticeship standards, each with varying pathways depending on a learner's individual job role. Each sector has a team of Operations Director, Operations Manager, Area Managers and Learning Coaches. This means there are always niche demands and having the flexibility to produce the right reports for the right people is business critical."

Since September 2021, Aptem's Head of Analytics has worked with Lifetime's Data Analytics and Reporting team, providing advice and guidance on Aptem's OData data table, structure and fields in order to meet a range of reporting needs.

Some examples of these reporting outcomes include:

- In-depth reporting on reviews in terms of timeliness of completion as well as rescheduling.
- Cross-group/tutor learner progress reporting to identify learners who are behind schedule on their programme.
- Reporting on completed and uncompleted assessments against qualifications for which learners are registered.
- Reporting on functional skills provision and outcomes.
- In-depth reporting on enrolment and onboarding processes.

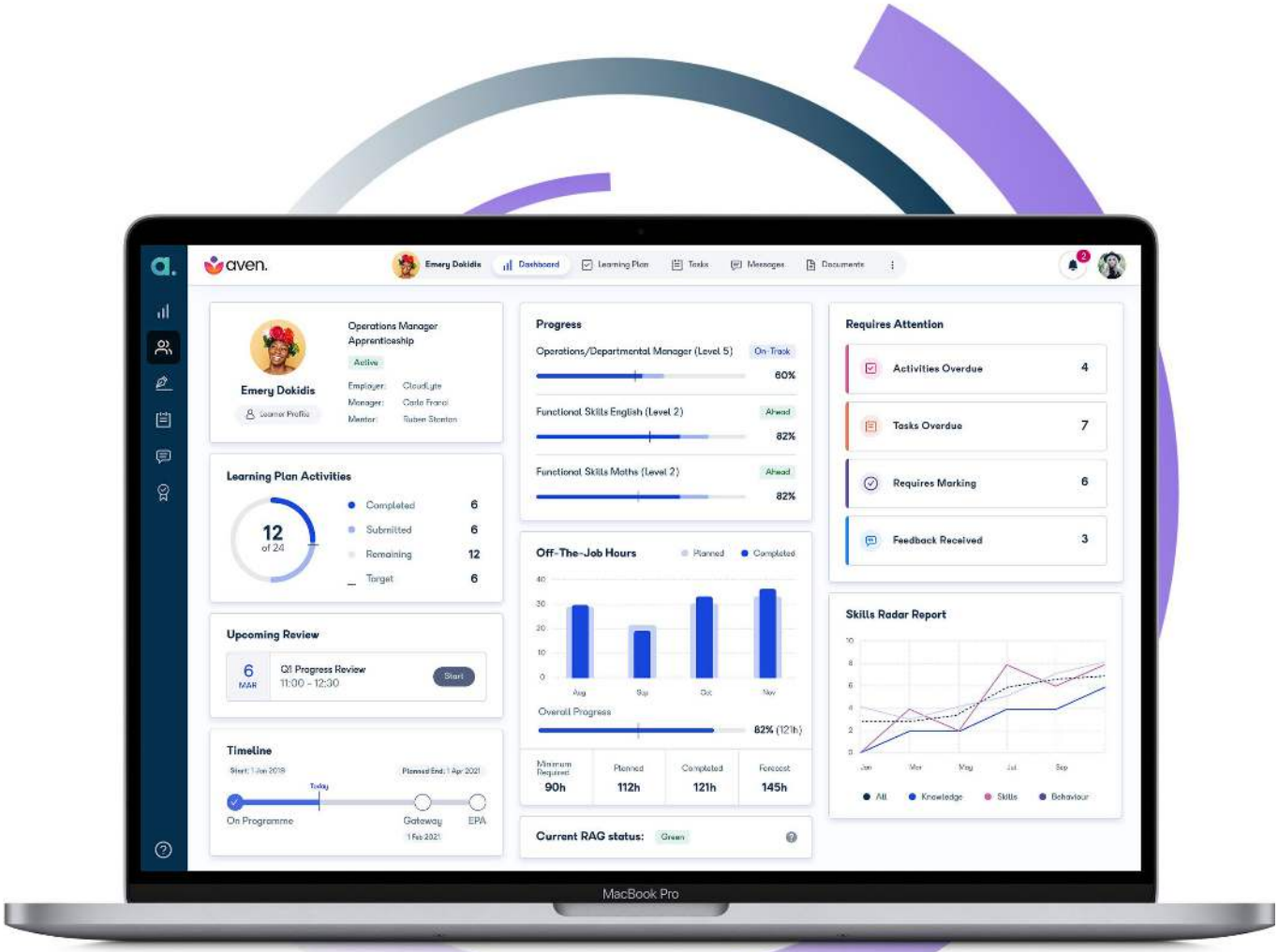
From Dom's perspective, *"What Aptem allows us to do, particularly through the User Generated Reports (UGR), is say 'as a one-off', we can give you this information. This has been very impactful. The number of fields available in the OData and in the UGR function in Aptem is phenomenal."*

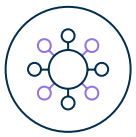
Tracking – and encouraging, learner engagement

"The difference between our visibility of learner engagement pre- and post-Aptem is significant. With Aptem, we can see every contact attempt and can look at when the learner logged on, what they did while in the system, and how they are progressing through the apprenticeship. We can share that information with the employer. In turn, this encourages employer support and engagement.

We are able to show what we are doing in our role as provider, and that acts as an incentive for the employer to also play their part. Our partner surveys tell us that employers respect us going to them with that detail to say 'it's a partnership, not a client relationship, and we need to support each other to get these learners motivated on programme'." Dom Wilkinson

Lifetime monitors 'real-time data on the sentiments and perspectives of learners at every stage of their learning journey'. Since moving to Aptem, satisfaction with learning technology has improved by 6%. The end result of this is that 90% of achievers state that 'their performance has improved as a result of achieving their apprenticeship'.





Efficient creation of programme variants through sub-programme functionality

In some sectors, there is a huge number of programme variants – such as hospitality where Team Member (level 2), Supervisor (level 3) and Manager (level 4), all come with a choice of pathway such as food production, barista, or cocktail making. Here 90% of the content might be the same, but 10% might be tailored.

"*This is so easily managed through Aptem's sub-programme functionality*," explains Dom. "*Not only do we avoid having to create hundreds of separate programmes, we can also track individual success rates and the global success rate across each of the standards.*"

The team also uses sub-programme functionality to manage functional skills training and for qualification provision. For example, the care sector and active leisure sectors have a lot of qualifications embedded within the apprenticeship standard.

Programme variation is so easily managed through Aptem's sub-programme functionality.

Dom Wilkinson, Product Owner, Lifetime Training



System flexibility and configurability that led to a refined onboarding process

In a project like this, you sometimes don't get things right first time. The important thing, especially when introducing a new process or approach, is to have the data available to show when something needs a re-think, and to be able to respond quickly in terms of process improvement and system reconfiguration. This was the case for Lifetime when transitioning to Aptem.

Dom explains: "*We used learner data to design our original enrolment journey in terms of frequency and interaction with the previous system. However, it became quite clear, quite quickly, that the process we had designed was not going to deliver a great experience for the learner, nor an enhancement for our coaches. We needed to remove some of the pain points for both parties quickly and were subsequently able to reconfigure our Onboarding Programme in Aptem. This flexibility resulted in a better balance of the time-saving, self-serve capabilities and the more time-intensive human touch to guide those learners that needed it through the process and achieve our onboarding targets.*"



The Aptem / Lifetime partnership

Aptem and Lifetime are now into the fourth year of our working partnership.

Dom says, *"As the person at Lifetime who is responsible for the partnership with Aptem, I will put my hands up to say that I have not always made it easy. Aptem consistently seeks, within reason, to accommodate our requests and our feedback. For me, it's not been about getting immediate resolutions; I was more interested in building a solid, honest partnership and I am very, very impressed with how the senior leadership team has responded to challenges."*

Dom values the different opportunities to engage with the strategic direction of Aptem, naming the Enterprise Customer Forum and plans that have been shared around introductions and improvements to functionality. *"I do think it's a strong partnership that we have, which is why I always offer Lifetime up as a test bed if Aptem needs a large provider to test and try new functionality. Aptem truly is a trusted partner to support us in our journey."*

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I cannot stress enough how impactful it's been pushing everything into Aptem and making it a one-stop shop, particularly for the learner.

Dom Wilkinson, Product Owner, Lifetime Training

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