



Case study: Aptem Enhance virtual assistant beta trial

Shaping the future of apprenticeship software with BMS Progress, Hawk Training and Pareto



BMS Progress™

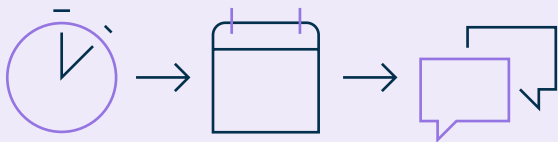


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Aptem Enhance virtual assistant

Through conversations with many customers, the Aptem team identified a need for a better way for learners to access information relating to their standards. Tutors spend hours each week answering routine or repetitive questions from learners, and learners often find themselves waiting for responses, which impacts their engagement.

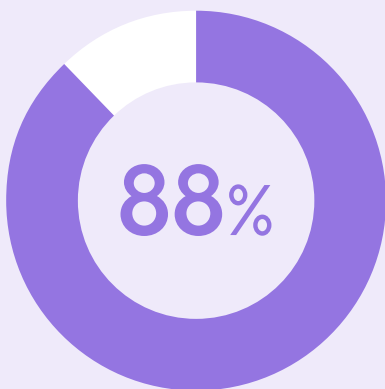


Between one hour and one day every working week.

The amount of time over 80% of tutors say they spend compiling repetitive answers to learner questions related to the apprenticeship standard outside learner meetings.*

To tackle this challenge, Aptem developed a virtual assistant, integrated within its apprenticeship management platform. It's part of a suite of AI-driven features called Aptem Enhance.

By surfacing AI-generated responses to frequently asked questions, Aptem's virtual assistant reduces the administrative burden on tutors and helps apprentices take ownership of their learning in a way that suits them. Through the tool, learners can access real-time explanations or reinforce their understanding of key concepts related to their specific apprenticeship standard.



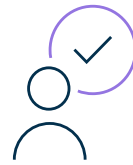
When asked how valuable a virtual assistant for learners would be, 88% of respondents said they thought this would be valuable, or very valuable.*

*Anonymous tutor survey conducted by Aptem before the trial.

The goal of the beta trial

A beta trial for the Aptem Enhance virtual assistant was launched in July 2024, offering a select group of customers access to the first iteration of the service. This trial was an important step in the development of the feature to ensure its accuracy and usability.

Through early access to the system and detailed discussions with the Aptem team, beta trial participants BMS Progress, Hawk Training and Pareto provided feedback to shape the development of the virtual assistant.



1,790

learners involved
in the trial



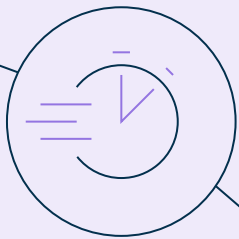
99

programmes included
in the trial

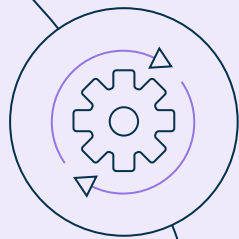


Provider goals for the virtual assistant

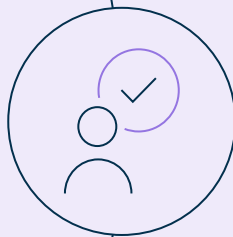
Each provider had their own specific goals and expectations regarding the project, but several common themes emerged across the test group. They wanted it to:



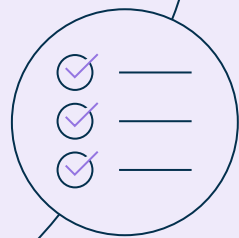
1 Save time / increase efficiency



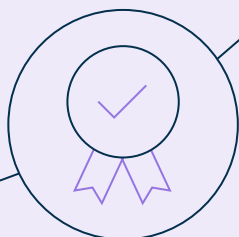
2 Reduce tutor/skills coach workload



3 Increase learner engagement



4 Improve compliance



5 Support quality assurance processes

Findings from the beta trial: benefits for learners

The learners participating in the trial shared very positive feedback on the virtual assistant to their tutors, finding it to be an empowering and supportive tool.

- ✔ **Empowers learners through a 'self-service' approach:** Learners in the trial reported that the virtual assistant helped them confidently check their knowledge, skills, and behaviours without needing to contact their tutor for basic queries. Hawk Training noted that from the first usage, most learners returned to use the virtual assistant again within a week, demonstrating satisfaction with their experience using it.
- ✔ **Provides additional support for learners:** Some learners at Pareto expressed that having the virtual assistant felt like 'having a personal skills coach available 24/7'. This enabled them to ask questions as they occurred to them, which they might otherwise have forgotten by the time they met with their tutor. Pareto also noted that learners were gaining confidence in using AI in a professional setting by engaging with the virtual assistant.
- ✔ **Delivers timely access to accurate information:** Understanding how a speedy response could help to keep learners engaged, Pareto was excited by the high quality of the assistant's fast (<5 seconds) responses, which they felt were closely aligned with the standard and helped learners to make informed decisions about how to progress their learning.
- ✔ **Offers assistance outside core working hours:** The tool was of great benefit to those working shifts, or for learners who had the occasional query outside of working hours and would otherwise have had to wait for a response from their tutor.



Findings from the beta trial: benefits for tutors and providers

All the providers taking part in the trial gained immediate value from the virtual assistant. BMS Progress ran the trial with a focused control group and activated it across all programmes during its general release. Hawk Training and Pareto maintained access to all learners after the trial. This commitment demonstrates the far-ranging benefits of the virtual assistant across the organisation.



Efficiency gains give more time back to tutors: BMS Progress aimed to reduce the time coaches spent on repetitive five-minute phone calls, often addressing the same types of questions. The assistant proved an effective solution, allowing coaches to dedicate more time to higher-value tasks. Coaches now see the assistant as a critical tool in minimising time spent on common queries, with the expectation that, over time, it will lead to a noticeable reduction in their workload.



Quality of service improves as tutors have more time for personalised support: The team at Pareto found that by minimising the back and forth between learners and tutors for basic queries, tutors could focus on more complex learner needs, ultimately improving the quality of service provided.



Audit trails mitigate the risk of plagiarism: The team at Pareto valued the oversight of how learners were using the virtual assistant, allowing them to track learner usage by viewing a transcript of chat threads. This feature helped ensure learners were using the tool appropriately, unlike relying on external sources like Google or ChatGPT, where often copy-pasting occurs without the same evidence trail.



Learner engagement improves with an easy-to-use tool: Hawk Training's primary goal was to boost learner engagement and encourage system adoption as they migrated to Aptem Apprentice. The team believed that the virtual assistant could be part of a suite of measures designed to motivate learners to make full use of Aptem's features and significantly improve their chances of success. Learners in this cohort reported that the virtual assistant helped them confidently check their KSBs using Aptem without needing to contact their tutor for basic queries.

Feedback from the beta trial of virtual assistant



I think it's been a really good trial. For the coaches to have so much enthusiasm and the ability to ignite that across the organisation is quite special – it really ensures the likelihood of successful adoption once it's rolled out to everyone.

Emily Bowler, Head of MIS, Funding and Compliance, BMS Progress

BMS Progress™



Having our learners be part of the beta trial was extremely helpful, as we launched with Aptem around the same time, so they could see the benefits of Aptem and its features. Aptem provided clear guidance at the beginning and during the trial, especially around user engagement and how our learners were utilising the tool.

Mark Holmes, Curriculum Lead,
Hawk Training



Hawk Training
Since 1989



For our learners, the fact that they have the assistant available outside of core working hours is great. They could be thinking about something and try to remember to ask their skills coach on Monday or whenever it might be... having that instant response is so valuable for them.

Madeleine Robinson, Head of Operations
and Transformation, Pareto



Tutor and learner feedback



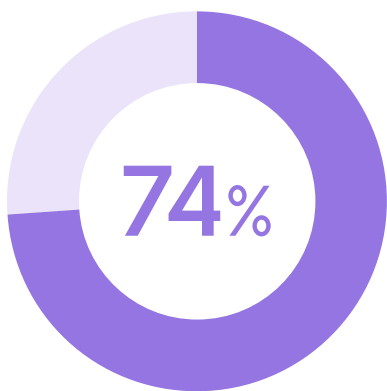
One of our learners asked the Aptem virtual assistant about a work scenario and whether this counted towards ‘Off-the-Job’ hours. The virtual assistant correctly confirmed it did not and gave the reasons. This is brilliant. It saves us a five-minute phone conversation per learner. The virtual assistant is doing exactly what we’d hoped for.



I sit down with a new learner and show them the assistant and how tailored it is to their curriculum. It gives that extra bit of confidence for them to continue with their work and apply it to their own roles.



I saw a learner yesterday and tried asking the assistant to provide a cold call template based on being a sales executive in a building industry, and it worked!



of learners surveyed indicated a high or very high level of satisfaction with the information received from the virtual assistant.



Easy to use –
it really is!



Helped a lot



It’s really good; it
helps me know more
about childcare



It explains the
question further

Virtual assistant in practice

Our analysis of the initial usage of virtual assistant showed that learners used the tool to ask questions on key concepts and to gain clarification and guidance that allowed them to progress their learning. Learners also used virtual assistant as a research tool and to understand how and when to log off-the-job hours.

Questions put to the virtual assistant fell into four key categories*

Questions on key concepts

- “Explain patient-centred care”
- “Can you explain the key areas of attachment theory?”
- “What is the Sale of Goods Act 1979?”
- “Professional practice in children’s residential care”
- “Examples of good and bad closing techniques”

Clarification and guidance

- “Please give me interview / exam style questions on theme 3 – project monitoring – that could possibly be in the portfolio interview”
- “What is a goal statement?”
- “What does this mean – Review own settings, policies, and procedures for health, safety and risk management and make improvements for change?”
- “What is the difference between early intervention and prevention?”



3,197

number of Aptem
Enhance virtual assistant
conversations

*Data taken from usage of the virtual assistant during the trial.

Off the job hours

- “What is off the job hours?”
- “When does CPD start for logging OTJL?”
- “How do I log off the job hours?”



Our learners stay more engaged and progress faster when they receive timely responses. A virtual assistant will be hugely helpful to keep us on track with our KPIs around response times and to keep that learner momentum going when they are working on a project or task.

Tutor feedback

Topic research support

- Explain key legislation and guidance relating to the health, safety and welfare of young children and how they inform company policies and procedures.
- Tell me about strategic planning.
- Describe the impact of inter-generational issues that can exist in families where a child or young person is in residential childcare.
- Describe the legal, regulatory, and ethical frameworks relating to Speedy Hire and their national sales team.



Shaping the development of the virtual assistant

All three customers were keen to explore integration between the virtual assistant and Checkpoint, our progress monitoring tool, during the trial. It was clear from the trial that this integration had the potential to offer timely AI-driven interactions that engage, support, and stretch learners.

Now released, here's how the functionality works

- 1** Checkpoint presents a series of questions to learners at relevant points in their apprenticeship to support learning and monitor comprehension of KSBs.
- 2** Whenever a learner completes a Checkpoint progress check, they can select the 'Get help with this question' option on each of the Checkpoint answers from the summary screen. This will open the virtual assistant with the question, and will provide detailed information/feedback to the learner. The learner can then interact with the virtual assistant and get further information if needed. The virtual assistant, therefore, provides stretch and challenge, and in-the-moment support.

Learners can also go back to the historical Checkpoint screen and use the "Get help with this question" option for any of the Checkpoint answers.

Learners can engage in conversations when assessing their knowledge, augmenting the value of Checkpoint and demonstrating the utility of the virtual assistant. For tutors, having oversight of learner progress at every stage, including follow-up queries, means they can prioritise their time and provide better support for those who need it. These data give providers a better picture of planned end dates and learner revenue forecasts based on objective progress indicators, which further add value to the organisation.

The virtual assistant / Checkpoint integration was part of the roadmap for Enhance, and development was accelerated following customer feedback from the beta trial.

Aptem Enhance complements valuable human expertise with a series of AI-powered tools.

- More focused teaching time for tutors.
- Higher quality, more responsive coaching for learners.
- Increased engagement and learner retention for employers.
- Improved chances of successful apprenticeship completion.

Some Aptem Enhance features will have an early adopter programme to gather feedback from a select group of users before the general release. If you want to become an early adopter for Aptem, please speak to your Customer Success Manager.

Find out more





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