

**The strategic transformation of
apprenticeships for a multi-academy trust:
The Leigh Institute and Aptem**



The Leigh Institute operates within one of England's largest multi-academy trusts, serving more than 660 schools. As part of the strategic transformation of its apprenticeship strategy, the team procured Aptem to turn a compliance-heavy, labour-intensive operation into a lean, data-confident offering for schools across the region and tripled its recruitment in the process.

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Background

The Leigh Institute is the professional development arm of Leigh Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust with more than 30 primary, secondary and special academies across Kent, Medway and South East London.

Its mission: *'Education for a better world'* extends beyond its own academies: The Leigh Institute, through its delivery arm ConnectED Hub Apprenticeships, uses the Trust's reach across 660 schools to provide levy-funded apprenticeships that help schools upskill their staff, providing the very best support for their learners. Its programme portfolio focuses on the education workforce across two pathways: teaching and business.

The teaching pathway comprises a Level 3 Teaching Assistant apprenticeship, a Level 5 SEND-specialist Teaching Assistant programme and a postgraduate Level 6 Teacher apprenticeship. The business pathway includes the Level 3 Business Administration. These programmes are delivered entirely in-house, with The Leigh Institute writing its own curricula and embedding a shared theoretical grounding across all teaching pathways.

At a glance



660+

schools in the Institute's network, all with access to levy-funded apprenticeship programmes



135

live learners using Aptem across teaching and business administration pathways



36

postgraduate Level 6 teacher apprentices currently on programme, with demand growing year on year



The problem with the previous approach

Before Aptem, The Leigh Institute's apprenticeship offering had grown organically from a broader further education model. Using the levy to support students into early career pathways had resulted in a fragmented offering across lots of programmes with small cohorts.

Programmes were managed across Google Suite, OneFile and manual ILR uploads, with a team of 12 required to keep everything moving. There was no reliable way to get real-time sight of learner progress, and compliance monitoring relied on manual effort rather than data.

The model was unsustainable. As Esther Cook, Director, puts it: *'We took a step back and asked ourselves how to maximise the impact of our programmes, and value from the apprenticeship levy. We concluded we had training requirements within our teaching and non-teaching staff base that could be perfectly served through apprenticeships, so we pivoted the focus of the levy.'*



Financial and operational sustainability was the goal when we changed the strategy. We knew our systems and processes had to change. We also knew that the real opportunity was in the education sector, working with levy-paying schools to upskill their people. But to do that at scale, we needed a platform that could support us.

Esther Cook,
Director, The Leigh Institute

Selecting Aptem



The Leigh Institute surveyed the market before selecting Aptem. 'End-to-end capability was the primary requirement, as we needed oversight of the programmes and to ensure data integrity,' explained Esther.

'We also needed a platform that could manage customised onboarding, ILR processing, learning plan delivery and embedding of training materials, progress reviews and reporting within a single system.'

A number of processes were very manual and labour intensive. Progress reviews were a specific challenge. Each one involved sending a physical form, chasing responses, managing cancellations and handling the stream of emails that followed. Scheduling alone was a significant drain on the team's time.

But the decision was also shaped by the quality of the people. 'We were really impressed with the professionalism of Aptem from the sales process through to the team we've worked with throughout our journey,' says Esther. 'Trust in the team was massively important. Seeing Aptem at conferences and hearing the leadership team at sector events gave us confidence that Aptem understands what's happening in apprenticeships. It didn't feel like a product sale.'



Implementation



Implementation was led on The Leigh Institute's side by Jenny Williams, Compliance Manager, working closely with Aptem's Implementation Consultants.

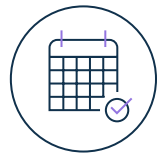
The team brought across three different cohort types simultaneously: learners on legacy programmes from the old model, learners already on newer programmes, and new learners starting their apprenticeships using Aptem. *'Having a dedicated person on our side, with regular training sessions and a really collaborative approach from Aptem, made it work,'* says Esther. *'Our Implementation Consultant was phenomenal.'*

The team's approach to adoption was practical: *'The best way to learn Aptem is to just use it, and you find that you can. Understanding how to configure the system to work for our programmes, the customisation we have been able to do has been a real benefit,'* said Esther.



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Day-to-day impact



Aptem is now the only system The Leigh Institute uses for apprenticeship delivery. Every learner, tutor and assessor works within the same platform.

The difference in day-to-day operations is marked. Progress reviews that previously involved physical forms and email chains are now fully digital. Compliance monitoring is supported by Power BI reports built on Aptem data, giving the team real-time visibility of QAR tracking, assessor caseloads, learner progress, Ofsted framework compliance and more. *'There is nothing like apprenticeships for needing to monitor things monthly,' Esther observes. 'Aptem gives us the data confidence to do that.'*

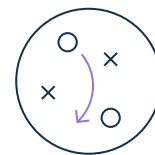
Internal quality monitoring has also improved. The ability to sample work and

cross-reference data within the platform makes ongoing quality assurance practical, enhancing the quality of our programmes and supporting both internal and external scrutiny.

Customer Success Reviews have been central to The Leigh Institute's ongoing development of the platform. *'The support has been really customised,'* says Esther. *'CS Reviews are a crucial part of how we use Aptem. There's still more we want to do and we're exploring APIs and OData extraction but we're confident Aptem is the right product for the future.'*



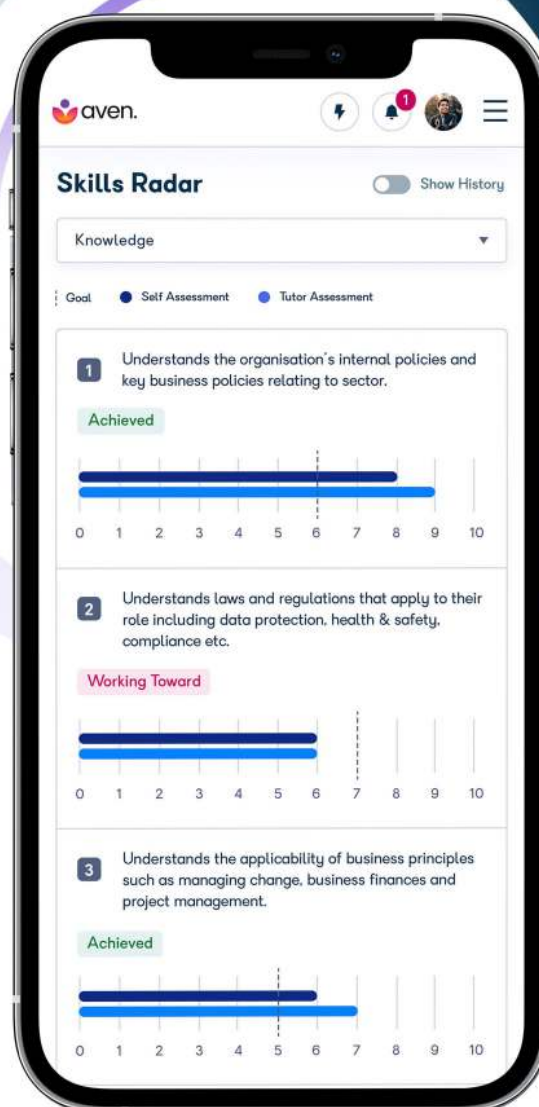
Strategic outcomes



The operational changes have enabled a strategic shift. With employer relationships already in place across 660 schools, The Leigh Institute can now work with headteachers and school leaders to identify skills needs and match staff to the right programme.

Recruitment numbers have tripled since implementing Aptem. Cohorts of 30 or more now start together. The team is fully optimised to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship strategy and the programme offer continues to grow: 36 teachers are currently on the postgraduate Level 6 pathway, with demand increasing year on year as more schools use their levy to invest in teaching quality. The team is currently exploring an Early Years pathway.

Teaching Assistants: a group historically underserved by professional development provision are now able to access structured, levy-funded training through the Level 3 pathway. *'There were groups like TAs who were missed and now aren't,'* says Esther. *'That matters to us. This is about upskilling the people who work with children every day.'*

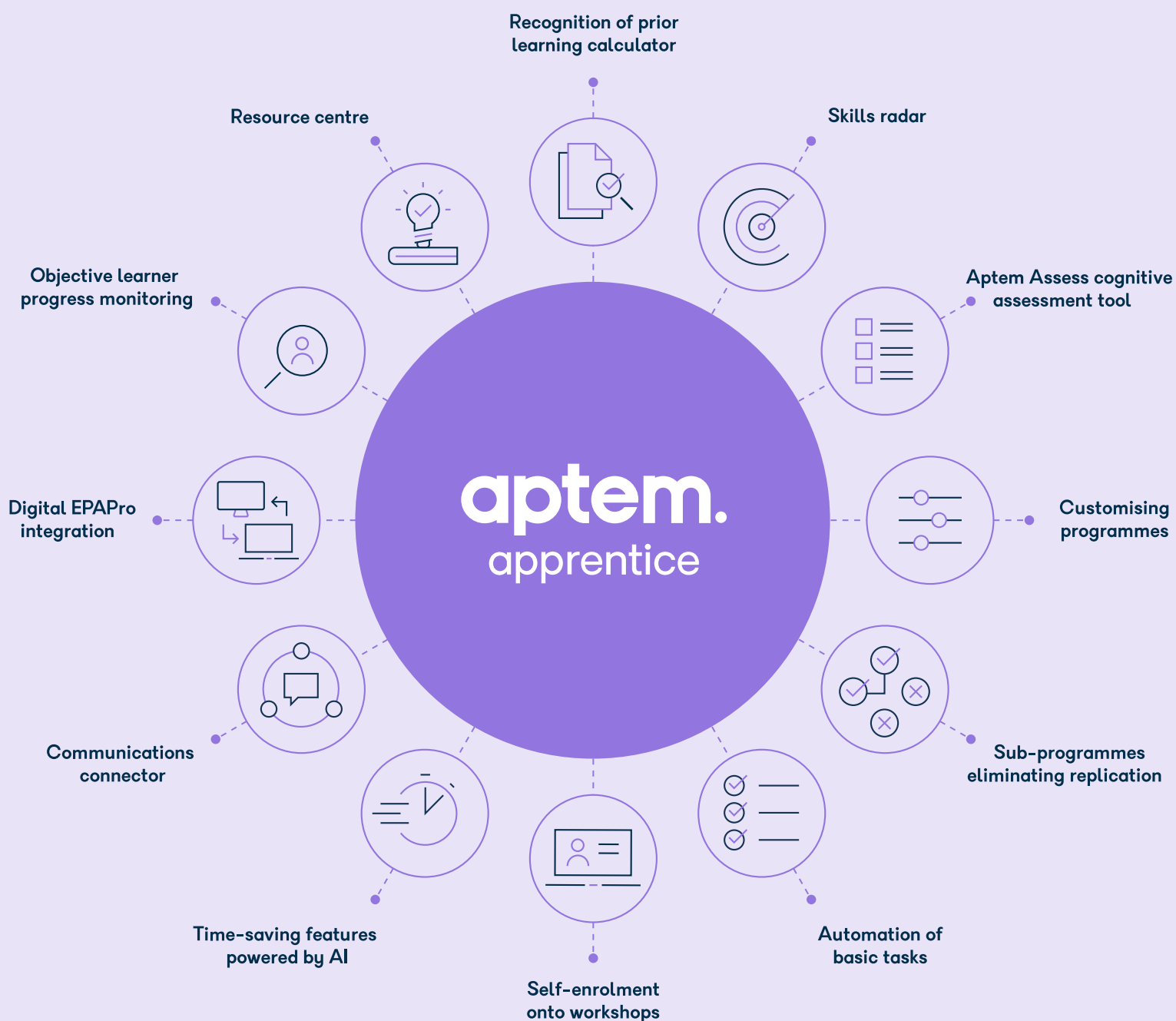




The efficiency savings, the data quality, the strategic shift in how we engage with employers. Aptem has been central to all of it. We built our delivery around the platform and it's paid off.

Esther Cook,
Director, The Leigh Institute

Features that make Aptem Apprentice the system of choice



We partner with other industry experts:



We've won numerous industry awards:



 **CabinetOffice**
Innovation Launch Pad

We are accredited:



HM Government
G-Cloud
Supplier

If you are an organisation that helps deliver further education and employment programmes and would like to transform the way you deliver in a cost-effective, efficient and compliant way, get in touch:

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www.aptem.co.uk/apprentice

Aptem is one of the fastest-growing SaaS software companies to manage vocational training, skills and employability programmes.

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- ✓ **Aptem Skills**, our award-winning end-to-end delivery platform that enables fully compliant ASF course delivery and accelerates re-employment.
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