

# Case Study

## ePortfolio for Skills Recognition in Plumbing

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### Background

Non-gas plumbers currently have no legal requirement to be qualified or registered, and it is estimated that approximately 5000 plumbers operate in the East Midlands alone who do not have an NVQ Level 2 qualification in plumbing.

This is less than ideal for a variety of reasons. For instance, the majority of contractors within the region operate exclusively within the domestic market and in order to respond to market needs at their present level of expertise (e.g. renewables) then the Level 2 qualification is an entry requirement for most reputable training. Options are further limited in terms of working on larger projects and with larger firms (except for work below their level of experience), bidding competitively for certain types of work as well as the likelihood that contractors who lack the Level 2 qualification will find it difficult to carry on working at their present level, let alone to progress further.

New options become available with an NVQ 2 qualification such as upskilling in response to external market influences, availability of different types of work and use of the progression routes available to experienced and qualified workers, thus providing plumbers with more chance of sustainable employment in the sector.

### Objective

The LLN and SummitSkills (Sector Skills Council for Building Services Engineering) are working together to produce an electronic tool to enable plumbers within the East Midlands identify their current level of working and progress to the next qualification level.

#### ***What are the barriers to undertaking NVQ Level 2?***

- You can be a plumber without getting the NVQ Level 2 qualification
- Regionally, the majority of plumbing businesses consist of only 1-2 people, so it is difficult to make time to gain further qualifications
- There may be a reluctance to admit the lack of a qualification, despite working over and above that level for many years.

#### ***How are we using an ePortfolio to help?***

The occupational standards were converted into a plain English format and built into an iWebfolio™ ePortfolio template, along with a clear visual 'traffic light' indicator. The tool enables the user to follow the stages of the requirements online, so that they can assess their current situation in private and at a time of their own choosing. It is designed to support progression and motivation to progress.

#### ***“You may be closer than you think”***

The tool may be used at one or all of the following points:

- Where am I now? (Indicates to the user their current level of working)

- What do I need to do? (Information about the sorts of evidence they need to collect)
- Upload evidence (Use the ePortfolio to present evidence to a college or training provider as evidence for APEL [Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning]).

### Screenshot ePortfolio for Skills Recognition in Plumbing

The Basics Printer Friendly

**The Basics - NVQ 2 Rating**

How many of these are you already doing, or have done?

- \* Drill holes in masonry materials
- \* Cut holes in masonry materials
- \* Cut chases in masonry materials
- \* Cut access in timber floors

All four of these are needed for NVQ 2

Count up how many you have done.

How do you score?

0	●	No NVQ2 experience in this area
1 - 3	●	You are part of the way towards NVQ2
4	●	Enough NVQ2 experience covered - congratulations!

## Next Steps

We are collecting feedback from plumbers who are trialling the tool, in order to refine the requirements, and we plan to involve the colleges in the short term. Initial feedback for the concept has been positive, and depending on the results, the next stage may be to build a bespoke tool to intelligently calculate the level percentage and provide contextual information and gap analysis.

## Further Information

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