

The 'A' Team

Chartwells chefs are benefiting from the Applied Ability Awards – Triple A – training system. The training programme was founded by the British Food Trust and developed by representatives of leading chef organisations.



Queenswood duty chef Susan Broomfield with her Triple A training certificate.

There are two levels of qualification: the AAA Foundation Chef certificate and the more advanced AAA Chef certificate. Each candidate works through the Triple AAA syllabus with mentoring support from a senior chef – often the head chef – in their own workplace. To achieve the certificate, which is externally assessed, candidates must complete a practical assessment, an on-line theory examination and an employment and aptitude appraisal. The company's Triple A programme is led by Chartwells executive chef Andrew Walker.

Triple A training at Queenswood

Ed Wright, Chartwells executive chef at Queenswood, an independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11-18 in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, has mentored one of his duty chefs, Susan Broomfield, through the Triple A training programme. As Chartwells extends the training programme; Ed is now working with other senior company chefs, sharing his expertise in working as a training mentor.

For Ed, a key benefit of the Triple A system is the flexibility which allows targeted training programmes to be tailored to the individual needs of each candidate. "It means that people can focus on the areas where they need to enhance their skills," he explains. One of the first steps is to conduct a 'skills scan' assessing the candidate's expertise and identifying key areas for improvement. A practical action plan is then designed.

"The action plan sets out where you want to go and creates a schedule for how you're going to get there," says Ed. "It helps keep you on track and means that both mentor and trainee know what they are working towards." Training in practical cooking skills is

delivered on-site and draws on existing school menus. Ed describes the Triple A training as 'inspiring'. He says: "It gives people something extra to aim for and the detailed monitoring system means they can see the progress they are making and know exactly what they are expected to do."

"Another advantage, he adds, is the web-based support provided for candidates which helps them prepare for their theory exam by logging on to an internet site where they can practice answering sample questions. Alongside the theory assessment, the major part of the test is a practical exam with candidates required to complete a range of tasks and dishes."

Scott Antony, development director for The British Food Trust, says: "A number of Compass Group divisions are participating in the Triple A programme. Andrew Walker and Chartwells pioneers like Ed Wright have been excellent in stepping up to the mark with their mentoring skills and keen candidates. They are helping to put chefs in the driving seat when it comes to setting professional standards, which is what the Triple A is all about."