



FIPS Modern Apprentice External Focus Group

29 June 2017

SDS, Houldsworth Room, Shandwick Place, Edinburgh (2pm to 5pm)

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Pamela Lockhart, Manager, NTP Reports and Funding Team	Skills Development Scotland
Lindsay Hewitt, National Operations Manager	Skills Development Scotland
Andrew Bruce, NTP Reports and Funding Team Leader	Skills Development Scotland
Debbie McFadyen, NTP Reports and Funding Team Administrator	Skills Development Scotland
Pauline Macwee, NTP MIS & Data Analyst	Skills Development Scotland
David Burt, NTP MIS & Data Analyst	Skills Development Scotland
Kirstie Evans	Babcock Training Ltd
Linda Petrie	Forth Valley College
Gillian Steele	JB Management (Scotland) Limited
Lindsay McLelland	Learndirect Limited
Andrew Fretwell	New College Lanarkshire
Linda Healy	Qualitas International Limited
Gillian Harvey	Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust
Isobel Dobson	The Intraining Group Limited
Linda Kinniburgh	The Tell Organisation Limited
Brian Woodrow	XL Training (Scotland) Ltd
Linsay Bryce	Xtra-Mile.com Ltd
Patricia Middleton	MGT Training

Apologies received from the following Training Providers:

Rainbow Room International, Di Maggios, South Ayrshire Council and GTG Group

Welcome and introductions

Section 2 - Purpose of this group / Terms of Reference

- Overall Purpose - To work together to ensure FIPS is a positive experience for all customers
- Draft Terms of Reference handed out to group as a starting point
- All group members confirmed that they were happy with purpose of group and Terms of Reference
- SDS confirmed focus group for MAs only at this stage
- Minimum of four meetings per year – based centrally in either Glasgow or Edinburgh or conference call where appropriate

Q - Group confirmed that they are the correct people to attend the FIPS focus group based on the agreed Terms of Reference.

Actions for SDS - NTP Reports & Funding Team

- Circulate link where we will publish all documents generated by group members

Section 3 - How FIPS works for you now

- What areas work well?
- Is there more training required and if so what areas should we cover?
- What areas do you feel could improve and how ?

1. What area of FIPS works well for group?

Dashboards

Dashboard screen and alerts very useful and user friendly, however, it would be better if alert provided more information at the top level as opposed to having to drill down to find out for example the name of the individual.

- Q – Asked if you can create own dashboard. SDS advised that providers should be able to create their own dashboards however it is important to always view the Training Provider dashboard for important notifications in relation to system change / issues.
- Notifications section within the Training Provider dashboard very helpful.
- Q – How do we close or delete Alerts - Demonstrated how to close Open Alerts on FIPS. Guidance will be created and published for all Training Providers

Contracts

Overall contracts okay –providers advised that forecasting will become available in the near future

Suggestion from the group – it would be useful to see spaces used against what was original target in contract area

Starts

- Overall positive feedback on inputting starts
- Being able to save all the way through is a big help as well as saving as a draft

- Good being able to search for individual and finding a lot of individuals when search is performed because FIPS links to SDS CIAG database
- Good being able to add employers and understand that SDS NTP Hub are required to approve all new employers added. SDS are asked for various reports on information around volumes of employers therefore TPs need to ensure Employer information is accurate when added, otherwise new employers will be rejected during the employer approval process

Change of Circumstances

- Change of circumstances much better – no longer having to terminate and re-start to change qualification

Claims

Undo claims – SDS advised and demonstrated how providers can hold or undo claims (before sent to Finance) - Group confirmed that this was an improvement

2. Is there more training required and if so what areas should we cover?

- All group members felt that there is training required in relation to reporting
- The group were advised that new “How to” guidance documents are due to be published soon and SIAs can support providers application
- Feedback from the groups was that “How To” guides are better as videos not always easy to use. Sometimes it is better to have a printed step-by-step document when trying to use a system. SDS confirmed that this is an area that the focus group can help shape going forward.

3. What areas do you feel could improve and how?

Claims Processing

Q – Clarification sought on which date is used for auditing milestone payments based on Quarterly Progress Reviews - QPR date or claimed date since the rules requiring claims to be submitted within 3 accounting periods no longer exists – SDS advised that it is the date the QPR has been undertaken which must be within the six week period commencing 3 weeks before and ending 3 weeks after the last date of each quarterly period.

Q – Has 21 days rule been removed for quarterly progress reviews? SDS advised rule still exists

- long process to make one claim, repetitive having to add the same details each time when making milestone claims

Q – Can multiple milestones be selected at a time – SDS advised that this is not available as each transaction needs to be individually accounted for.

Q – Is there a way to check right date entered for milestones – SDS advised that the additional information collected when claims area made can be viewed by SDS Compliance, however this is not available for all users. SDS is a Public Body and we are required to ensure all transactions are appropriately accounted for. The additional information is required to allow SDS to monitor this.

Q - boxes aren't big enough to see for example the declaration

SDS advised there is a scroll down facility available to take you to the bottom of the declaration, however will check with Developers to see if the default box can be extended.

Individual Payment Plans

Q – System does not ensure expected achievement dates of milestones are on or before expected end dates, why is this? - SDS advised that there is an outstanding change request which has still to be implemented covering this. When implemented, system will ensure this is the case.

Validation

SDS acknowledged that there have been some teething problems with validation, however, all technical validation issues have been escalated and the majority are now resolved. Resolution to remaining technical validation issues remain as top priority for SDS.

Q – Money being paid and then recovered is very difficult to manage, why not wait until start confirmed before making start payment? SDS advised that validation is working well for some Training Providers. It was also highlighted that some smaller providers may rely on payments prior to validation.

SDS confirmed that Training Providers can make claims for milestones before the start is confirmed, best practice would be to wait until the start is confirmed before making any milestone claim. The reason for this is that all claims processed will be recovered prior to rejecting the start payment if the start has not been verified and updated to confirmed at 30 days. This was communicated in the Validation training videos.

In addition, if a Training Provider has claimed a milestone or multiple milestones one week and this /these have yet to be confirmed, then, no further milestone claims should be made until the initial milestone(s) are confirmed. The reason for this is that milestones need to be claimed in sequential order, so if an individual has failed to confirm their original progress at the 30 day period, the claim will be undone. As milestones need to be processed in sequential order any additional milestones claimed after the initial milestone(s) were processed will also be undone (even if only processed 2 days before)

Q – Can providers see if a verification message has been sent for starts and milestones – other providers advised where it can be found and how to view was demonstrated on system.

Q – Why are starts remaining as unconfirmed even although text message received - SDS explained that there can be a delay in the assignment being updated to confirmed, it does not always happen immediately and that TPs should wait 24 hours before raising concerns with the helpdesk.

SDS advised that employer responses to milestones are not always recognised in FIPS at this time and Developers are working to resolve this.

Q – What are the system/timescales of verification messages

Explained that for:

- Starts, the verification should be kicked off when the assignment is approved by the Contract Executive, however, TPs should wait 24 hours before contacting the helpdesk as delays can occur.

- Milestone & Outcome Payments, the verification should be kicked off after pay run is transferred to Finance on a Friday afternoon, however, there are a high number of transactions and an exact timescale cannot be provided. There may be a small number of verification e-mails/sms sent the next working day (Monday). Training Providers should only raise concerns with the helpdesk if they cannot see the payment verification being sent on the Tuesday after the pay run.

Q – Could text messages be identified as SDS because young people may not respond to unknown texts (different phone numbers used each time when text is sent) - explained that SDS cannot change the fact that different telephone numbers are used each time, this is linked to the service provider delivering this facility. SDS advised that perhaps e-mail might be better as SDS is identified in emails and this allows clarity of who is contacting the apprentice.

- Text messages can be confusing as providers may sign up MAs before their course starts so response might be N but should be Y. SDS advise that this need to be explained to candidate during sign up and induction to avoid.

SDS advised that the “How To” guide on Verification contains the timings of messages and the wording used in text and email messages. SDS suggested that the group can look at the wording of the text / e-mail messages and propose appropriate wording however noting there is limitation of 160 characters for an SMS text message.

- Group advised SDS emails often sent to junk mail boxes. Therefore there is a need to set SDS email as safe sender.

A few group members shared their own processes regarding the verification messages and ensuring that their MAs respond. These include:

- Sending text / e-mail, message to all trainees when they are signed up or when their details are entered onto FIPS to remind them and advise what to expect from SDS and the importance of replying.
- One Training Provider is happy to share SOPs in relation all of their new processes linked to the introduction of FIPS in advance of the next meeting

Logging on to FIPS

Logging into FIPS - Generally no issues logging in with mobiles, however, guidance needs to be clearer regarding # key when logging in – SDS to review this authentication process.

Training Provider frustration over double log-in –

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is a method of computer access control in which a user is granted access only after successfully presenting several separate pieces of evidence to an authentication mechanism.

SDS has a responsibility under principle 7 of the Data Protection Act to ensure appropriate controls are in place.

DPA Principle 7

“Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.”

Adding Employers

Sometimes screen freezes when searching for employers – using postcode doesn't always return employer – NTP Hub to review guidance and update if required

Sometimes employer can't be found when searching but appears when selecting add new employer - NTP Hub to review guidance and update if required

There is an issue when trying to add England based employers (training venue) – NTP Hub to investigate

No facility to update an employer address – SDS advised that help desk call needs to be raised for this.

IDX Facility

Q - Will there be a facility to upload information from (Maytas)?

SDS advised that there will be no facility to upload data to FIPS (IDX), however, data can be extracted from views in FIPS and uploaded to their systems.

NTP Hub

Q - Could the help form be added to FIPS?

Group suggested upload screenshot function for help form rather than waiting for email to ask for screenshot (NTP Hub to take back comments and look at help form)

Q - Will helpdesk phone line be re-instated?

SDS advised that this change was made to ensure we could prioritise all requests received for 2 systems and multiple programmes and the team make outgoing calls where necessary. It was explained that the work of the group could however help in reducing the number of help calls by working together to share best practice, which can then be shared with other Training Providers, feeding into the development of appropriate help guides, etc.

Section 4

Next steps for FIPS

- History module added to FIPS will contain 3 years of data from CTS. If trainee has prior funding it will appear in the individual search screen. When implemented, automatic approvals will be available for all apprentice starts with no prior history.
- Q – Will providers still have to contact SIA for history check? -SDS advised that information will be available on FIPS when history module is introduced. When history module implemented starts will be automatically approved instead of Contract Executive manually approving, with the exception of:
 - MAs who have a previous funding history
 - Where Prior Achievement Field has been populated
 - If the Training Category has been changed
- Employability Fund in user testing currently. No implementation date as yet.
- Expected achievement dates to be calculated in line with expected end date
- Online forecasting and re-forecasting by providers in the pipeline

Section 5

Topical overview

Q – Can MA and FA programmes be split? SDS demonstrated how to do this, further guidance will be produced for all Training Providers to access.

Q – Is there more than 1 way to make claims in FIPS - SDS demonstrated ways to submit milestone claims by filtering in different ways.

SDS demonstrated how to use advanced find on FIPS and showed how to customise Active Assignments list

- filter by programme
 - how to remove columns
 - how to add more fields
 - how to re-order columns
 - save as new version
 - look in saved views and how to share within organisation
 - where to find in My Views
 - how to custom filter
 - export to Excel
- How to guide requested by group. The group were advised basic guides will be available shortly.
- SDS advised there are a lot of learning materials online which can be found using Google for Microsoft Dynamics or using the help function on FIPS for general dynamics guidance.

Q – How to get list of all milestones claimed and outcomes outstanding? SDS will create advance find and share with Training Providers.

Q – Is there a leaver with achievements report? – There is a CRM view available to all Training Providers called Leavers who have claimed Outcome view. SDS demonstrated this at meeting, it is listed in the Assignment CRM views and is called “Leavers who have claimed Outcome”.

Q – Where can I view what stage milestone validation is at - SDS demonstrated Active Payment Claims views regarding validation process. “How To” guide is available on Apprenticeship.Scot.

Q – Are Norm Plans available in FIPS? SDS showed where to find norm plans on FIPS through Qualifications section. How to guide is available for this on Apprenticeship.Scot

Section 6

Date of next meeting / Agree standing agenda items / AOB

Date next meeting – 31st August

Location – Plato -Lomond House, Glasgow. Time 10am to 1pm.

Standing agenda items to be agreed at next meeting.

Actions for SDS NTP Hub

- *Group Members, Terms of Reference and Minutes of Meeting to be published*
- *Forward Agenda (to be published once agreed)*

- *Communication about Focus Group to be published in FIPS*

AOB

SDS suggested that it would be good to discuss training and share processes at the next meeting.

All group members confirmed that they felt the initial meeting had been useful and are happy to remain on group.

Pamela thanked all members for attending and for contributing to discussions.

Meeting closed 4.45pm