



Skills  
Development  
Scotland

# Quality Assurance Reviews Analysis 2018/19

Analysis of 49 Quality Assurance Reviews  
of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) and/or  
Employability Fund (EF) Training Providers

**Stuart Drummond,**  
Modern Apprentice, Clackmannanshire Council





**Lisa Hamilton,**  
Modern Apprentice, FES

# Overview

## Outline of Report

### Summary

During 2018/19, 49 Quality Assurance Reviews of training providers delivering Modern Apprenticeship and/or Employability Fund provision were carried out. This report outlines the combined findings from the 49 reviews, providing a breakdown of the areas for improvement or development and identifying effective practice.

This report has been developed for training providers delivering Modern Apprenticeship and/or Employability Fund provision to help support continuous improvement in the delivery of training provision.

### Process

Areas for improvement and examples of effective practice were extracted from the 49 quality reports completed by Quality Assessors after quality review visits. There were over 300 areas of effective practice and over 500 areas for improvement noted across the reviews.

Presented by the three quality standards within the quality reports, the findings were categorised by the 25 quality themes for this analysis. Each effective practice and area for improvement statement was assigned to up to three quality themes.

Following the categorisation of the report content, each quality theme was analysed separately, producing an in-depth breakdown of the

development issues found among training providers within each individual theme.

Effective practice examples have also been identified to inform continuous improvement actions for the future. The small selection in this report does not reflect all the areas in which training providers are doing well. The selected effective practice statements, whilst not a comprehensive or exhaustive list, are provided to support continuous improvement in some of the areas for improvement reported.

The 'Theme Information' at the top of each page is taken from the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework – Self Assessment Guidance 19-20 and contains examples to illustrate the practices that a good provider and an excellent provider may adopt.



# Overview

## Provider Characteristics

In 2018-19, there were 49 quality reports issued.

The high-level scores of the 49 providers reviewed are set out below:

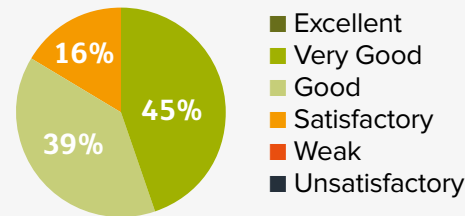
- **Grade 1:** Score over 601 (Excellent):  
None
- **Grade 2:** Score between 501 and 600 (Very Good):  
**22 Providers (45%)**
- **Grade 3:** Score between 401 and 500 (Good):  
**19 Providers (39%)**
- **Grade 4:** Score between 301 and 400 (Satisfactory):  
**8 Providers (16%)**
- **Grade 5:** Score below 300 (Weak):  
None
- **Grade 6:** Score rating not awarded (Unsatisfactory):  
None

Provider Size Definitions:

- **Large:** 100+ starts
- **Medium:** 50 to 99 starts
- **Small:** up to 49 starts

## Grade received by Providers

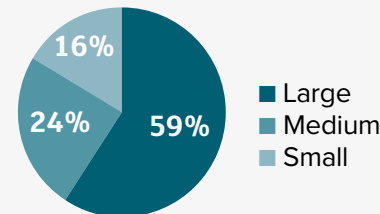
reviewed in 18/19 Quality Assurance Reviews



The size and type of providers who were reviewed was as follows:

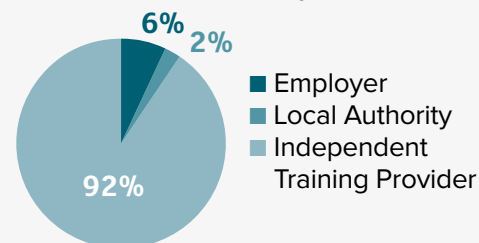
## Size of Providers

reviewed in 18/19 Quality Assurance Reviews



## Type of Providers

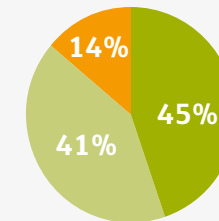
reviewed in 18/19 Quality Assurance Reviews



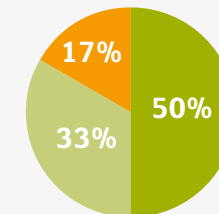
## Overall Grade by Provider Size

The scores received by providers relative to their size are as follows:

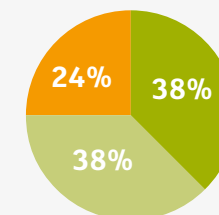
### Large Size Providers (29)



### Medium Size Providers (12)



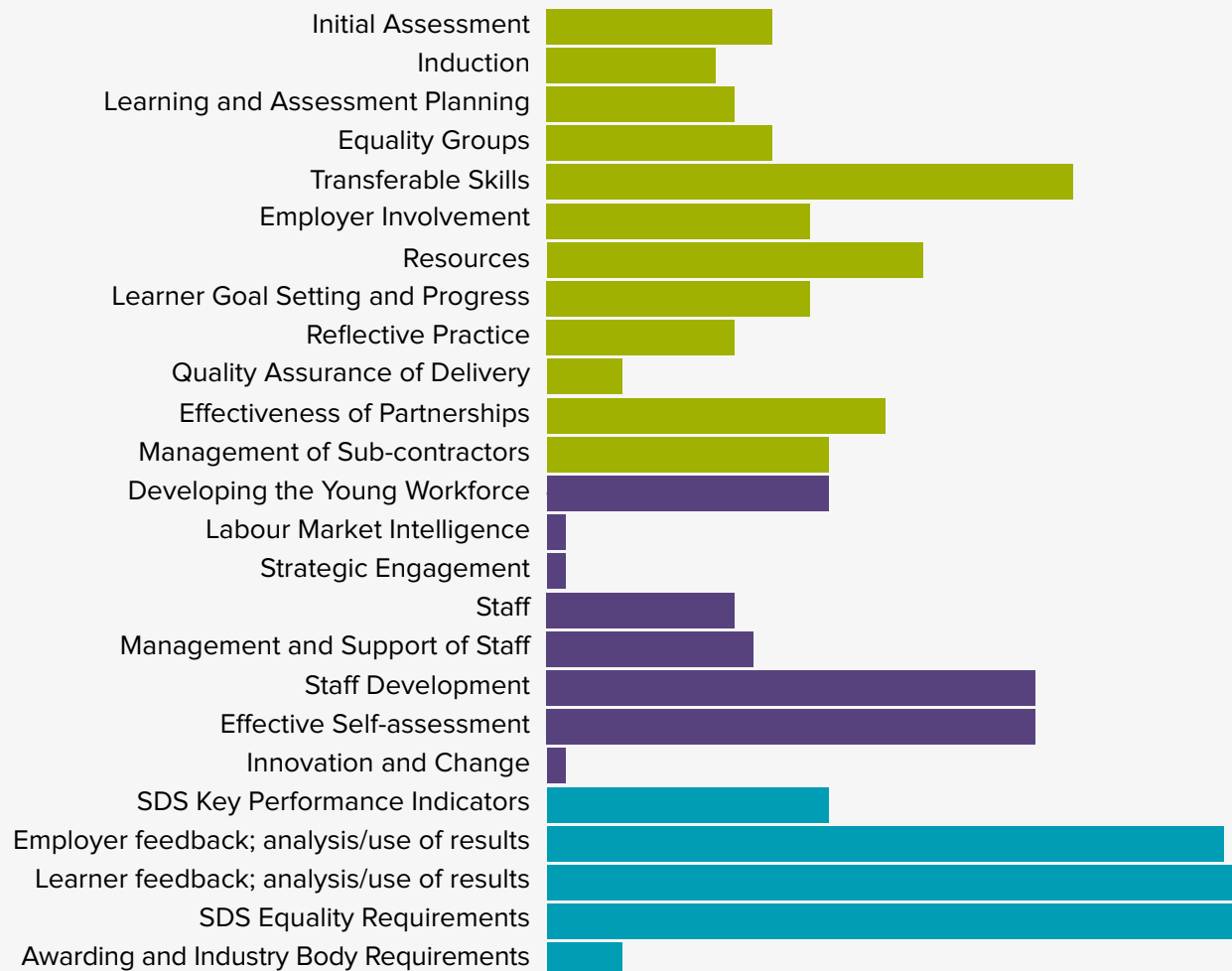
### Small Size Providers (8)



# Summary of Areas for Improvement

## Number of Providers

who received an **Area for Improvement** in each **Quality Theme**



In instances where there are fewer areas for improvement under a theme, this is only an indication of the number of times it was mentioned in the QA reports. This does not necessarily mean that SDS considers that theme as less important than those with a larger number of areas for improvement.

The high-level results give an indication from these reviews where we found areas for improvement. It is a useful guide to where providers may wish to consider their own practice but care should be taken in over-interpretation as the methodology of capturing these is such that some issues belong to more than one theme. In addition, expectations of providers in relation to themes will be proportionate to the size and nature of the provider. The following pages of this document give a more in-depth analysis of the findings in relation to each quality theme where they have been broadly categorised.





NO IDLING ZONE  
PLEASE TURN OFF  
YOUR ENGINE

Vrahim  
Nselenga

Arnold Clark

**Vrahim Nselenga,**  
Modern Apprentice, Arnold Clark

# Service Delivery



# Initial Assessment

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have in place appropriate initial assessment processes, in proportion to the size and nature of their SDS contract and their role in delivering workplace learning.

They will be able to provide examples of how effective initial assessment processes are for learners.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Demonstrate how the implementation of initial assessment processes ensures that learning is tailored for every learner.

They will measure and review the impact of their initial assessment processes for all learners.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Learning Assessment tools are used to determine individual learning styles. This assists assessors and trainers to tailor training to individual needs and recognises the diversity of their cohort.



Online mechanical aptitude and basic skills assessments are used; results of these assessments inform bespoke training to support each individual.



One-to-one interviews are carried out with apprentices/learners to identify their motivation and to take into account prior learning and previous industry experience.

## Areas for Improvement

- Additional support needs are not effectively identified for each apprentice/learner
- Candidate motivations for being on the programme are not identified
- Initial assessment is limited to interviews and does not include other diagnostic/tangible methods
- No standards set for sub-contractors regarding the content of initial assessment
- Some apprentices/learners are unclear on initial assessment process
- There is no process for assessing the effectiveness of initial assessment questions
- There is no recognition or assessment of prior learning

# Induction

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Implement/have in place induction activities that clearly benefit all learners, and which give each learner the best chance of success. (They are likely to cover all the areas in the guidance prompts in the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework and be timetabled/ have time specifically allocated.)
- Have in place an induction that clearly explains the programme/training to be undertaken and answers questions about the expectations of learners and employers.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Provide a thorough introduction for learners and employers or workplace partners.
- Provide support to the supervisor in relation to coaching the learners.
- For apprenticeships – make sure that employers fulfil obligations in relation to induction to the workplace. Employers may also co-design and deliver learner induction programmes.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Apprentices/learners receive an Induction Pack to take away that includes copies of SDS paperwork, organisational policies, qualification unit content, assessment approach and Knowledge and Understanding questions relevant to their qualification.



Apprentices/learners complete a quiz following the Welcome Induction events. This is an informal and fun way to reinforce the information provided during the session.



Following their induction, new apprentices/learners receive a welcome email to reiterate the information discussed and to provide a detailed handbook. This ensures they are clear about their qualification and the commitment required from them and their employers.

## Areas for Improvement

- Employers are not consistently involved in the induction process
- Induction does not fully convey content and expectations of programme
- Induction is not individualised for each apprentice/learner
- Induction process is not structured or robust enough
- Induction process/materials are not suited to apprentices/learners on all frameworks

# Learning and Assessment Planning

## Theme Information

### A Good Provider may:

- Effectively develop, prepare and schedule where and how learning, teaching and assessment will take place for each area/programme of delivery in line with the nature of their provision.
- Have a good relationship with the employers they work with and an understanding that both parties are clear what their expectations are in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.
- Have given consideration to the practicalities of delivery for the learners.
- Have a partnership agreement or equivalent with all their employers and have in place clear mechanisms for communication and monitoring which ensure that employers are delivering to the expected standard.

### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Clearly tailor and adapt their planned arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment for each individual. Fully engage learners and employers (where relevant) in this planning.
- Provide each learner with a tailored individual learning and personal support plan which the learner 'owns' and understands, and which adds value to their learning experience.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Learning plans are prepared with information on objectives and expected learning outcomes, as well as details on activities, timings and required resources. This provides confidence that staff plan delivery sessions for the benefit of apprentices/learners.



Employers and apprentices/learners are fully involved in selecting the most appropriate units to complete. A training needs analysis is carried out with the apprentice/learner and employer, which takes into consideration the frequency of tasks within the job role and employer requirements.



Information related to on and off the job elements of the programme is well communicated to apprentices/learners and employers. Receiving details of planned college blocks and timetables in advance enables employers to plan for apprentices/learners not being on site.

## Areas for Improvement

- Employers are not always consulted on learning and assessment
- Individual training plan is not sufficiently detailed for apprentices/learners
- Apprentices/learners do not always sufficiently understand their learning plan
- Apprentices/learners are not involved in selecting optional units
- No standards are set for sub-contractors regarding on and off the job learning
- Not all apprentices/learners are provided with enough time for off the job training
- Some apprentices/learners do not receive an effective learning plan at the beginning of their training



# Equality Groups

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Make clear and reasonable adjustments to their planning for delivery and assessment processes to meet the needs of individuals from specific equality groups to optimise their chances of success. They will be able to exemplify, demonstrate, and produce evidence of instances where they have actively planned this.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Develop an inclusive culture by building into their overall design and preparation for delivery, the flexibility to respond proactively to the needs of individuals in equality groups that face barriers, while ensuring those individuals are not singled out.
- Create a positive environment which encourages disclosure by learners, allowing the provider to shape and design delivery for each individual.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Reasonable adjustments are made for apprentices/learners with a self-identified impairment, such as an increase of face-to-face support and adapted learning materials.



A support planner is created for apprentices/learners with additional support needs, which is shared with their employer. The support planner is accessible to all staff involved with the apprentice/learner and is used to tailor the programme to their needs.



Comprehensive, documented monthly 1:1 meetings are held between assessors and management. This involves discussion around the numbers of staff who are working with individuals from underrepresented groups and what extra support is being provided. This helps keep staff focussed and ensures targets are on track.



Resources with information on equality, diversity, safeguarding and wellbeing are provided to staff and apprentices/learners. They include a range of case studies, activities and exercises for all to work through. They are informative and helpful in understanding the needs of equality groups.

## Areas for Improvement

- Additional support needs and strategies used to support apprentices/learners are not formally documented
- Additional support needs for apprentices/learners are not adequately considered
- Employers are not sufficiently informed about additional support available and the organisations that can provide support
- There are limited resources/support in place for apprentices/learners with additional support needs

# Transferable Skills

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Design and prepare to deliver transferable skills to be in the context of each programme.
- Ensure that the best use is made of naturally occurring evidence (i.e. generated through work-related activities in a balanced way).
- Ensure that learners value the development of transferable skills and do not just see it as requirement.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Design methods for delivery of transferable skills that clearly add value and contribute to the career progression and personal development of learners.
- Go beyond the minimum requirements of a qualification in order to support this.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Core skills which are not embedded and require separate certification are contextualised to the workplace. This supports apprentices/learners to understand their relevance in their day to day roles.



Core skills prior achievement is discussed at induction. Core skills are embedded in the qualification within the context of the apprentice/learner's vocational area and apprentices/learners are assessed using naturally occurring evidence.



All apprentices/learners complete a Career Development Plan based on the four quadrants of the SDS Career Management Skills guidance. This encourages apprentices/learners to look beyond their current training role and explore potential options for the future.



Discussions take place with apprentices/learners regarding their qualification and future. This enables them to understand the benefits and impact of their qualification in supporting their career aspirations.

## Areas for Improvement

- Core skills delivery and/or materials are not fully contextualised
- Core skills are not considered until the end of training
- Not all apprentices/learners discuss career goals or are aware of career skills resources
- Not all apprentices/learners are aware of core skills or relevance to their training
- Provider does not monitor how sub-contractor(s) delivers core skills

# Employer Involvement

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Demonstrate that they have involved employers and the employer voice in the design of their work-based learning provision.
- Demonstrate one or two examples where programmes have been tailored to meet specific requests from individual employers.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have clear evidence that the employer voice is integral to the design and delivery of all provision and clearly adds value to the delivery.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Employers are involved in the planning stages for learning and assessment. This includes identifying appropriate work tasks and the performance and knowledge requirements for each unit, as well as the support required for apprentices/learners to allow them to meet targets set during reviews.



A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been developed for employer mentors, outlining the mentor's roles and responsibilities. This is useful where the apprentice's/learner's mentor is not the same person who signs off the employer SLA.



Delivery is tailored to employer needs through regular engagement and discussion of apprentice/learner progression. This shows a collaborative approach that is mutually beneficial and ensures that any barriers are removed.

## Areas for Improvement

- Documented employer agreements do not provide clarity on all roles and responsibilities
- Employers are not consistently involved in discussions regarding apprentice/learner progress
- Employers are not consistently involved in induction
- Employers are not consistently involved in learning and assessment planning
- Some employers are not aware of existing SLA
- Some employers or workplace staff are not clear on roles and responsibilities
- There is a lack of regular communication with employers including face-to-face dialogue



# Resources

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Demonstrate that they have tailored their resources in the design of their work-based learning provision.
- Provide examples and/or evidence of where tailoring and responding to individuals' needs is making a difference.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have clear evidence that tailoring of provision includes a wide range of high quality learning and assessment materials/ approaches that are integral to the design of provision.
- Demonstrate that this tailoring of resources reflects feedback from staff/learners, is innovative and addresses industry developments and future requirements.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Training resources include detailed information and a relevant range of learning tools/activities to demonstrate the required knowledge and understanding e.g. graphics as well as text to suit different learning styles; action plan pages to record tasks to be completed following each workshop and pages for assessors to record completion and progress.



E-learning resources are developed for apprentices/learners. This aids those with a visual learning style.



A bespoke online portfolio is available and can be used on any smart technology. This makes it accessible to apprentices/learners who may not have regular access to a computer. It enables assessors to set goals and tasks for apprentices/learners who can easily upload their evidence for review.

## Areas for Improvement

- Apprentice/learner is inhibited by lack of provision or access to equipment/resources
- Not all apprentices/learners or employers utilise or are offered particular useful resources (that are in the workplace but are off limits)
- There is limited technology to support learning and assessment
- There is no effective use of social media to communicate with apprentices/learners and employers
- There is no monitoring of the quality of resources available to apprentices/learners
- The workplace environment is not suitable for progress review meetings

# Learner Goal Setting and Progress

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have clear learning and assessment progress reviews with timeframes for specific learning tasks for all learners.
- Have approaches that clearly support tailored learner progression.
- Demonstrate that, for almost all:
  - learner review is happening at least at the frequency required by SDS requirements;
  - learners and employers value the process; and
  - learner reviews are contributing to progression and achievement of the learners.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Demonstrate they have effective/innovative approaches for meeting individuals' goals and monitoring and reviewing progress that go beyond SDS minimum requirements.
- Ensure full involvement of the employer, the individual and the learner.

## Examples of Effective Practice



An Apprenticeship Dashboard is used to illustrate apprentice progress, which is sent to employers on a monthly basis and is accessible to apprentices. This is useful for employers and apprentices to keep track of progress.

Apprentices/learners are encouraged to use SMART targeting to plan how they will reach their goals, ensuring that they are able to set achievable goals and measure their progress.

## Areas for Improvement

- Apprentice/learner did not receive timely feedback on their assessment progress
- Apprentice/learner progress is inhibited by planned job rotation not occurring
- Apprentices/learners confused by different approaches to learning and assessment between employer/assessor
- Apprentices/learners are not fully involved in their own goal setting
- Changes to learning and assessment were not communicated effectively to multiple stakeholders
- Disruption in progress of apprentice/learner due to changes in staff assignments
- Employers/line managers are not always clear on apprentice/learner progress or consistently involved in progress reviews and goal setting
- Pace of delivery is not appropriate for all apprentices/learners and employers
- Progress review documentation is ineffective in supporting apprentice/learner progress
- Provider does not celebrate apprentice/learner success
- There is insufficient monitoring of apprentice/learner progress and achievement

# Reflective Practice

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Demonstrate that their staff use reflection to inform improvements in their delivery.
- Evidence this with a few examples of changes which have been implemented because of reflective practice.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Demonstrate that reflection and sharing practice is integral to improving delivery. All staff will be able to provide examples of this.
- Depending upon its size, have clear processes in place to facilitate this and benchmark themselves against other similar providers/businesses.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Staff carry out regular work-shadowing. This allows for sharing best practice and building teamwork.



Regular standardisation meetings take place to share good practice and feedback from awarding bodies. Standardisation activities also take place using technology. This ensures that all assessment staff are well informed of developments and best practice regardless of their geographical location.



An extensive Quality Review was used to provide feedback against SDS key indicators and consider the effectiveness of the provision; this informed the Quality Action Plan with progress demonstrated and additional actions identified.



In-service days are used to good effect by providing time for reflection and opportunity to share best practice across the delivery team. This supports the achievement of common goals and has been found to be motivational.

## Areas for Improvement

- Good practice forums are not as effective as they could be
- Provider does not formally capture reflections and ideas on enhancing the learner journey from tutors/assessors
- Staff meetings are not as effective as they could be (incl. lack of structure, limited staff attendance)
- Staff members would like more opportunity for sharing practice



# Quality Assurance of Delivery

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have a process (in proportion to the size and nature of their SDS contract) of ensuring the standards of delivery of all their staff. This may be formal or informal. They should be able to show that this has led to improvements in delivery.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Clearly demonstrate that review of the standard and quality of delivery is integral to their service and has had an impact on improving delivery of training. This may include formally implemented policies for peer review, observation of practice or performance management.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Internal Verifiers regularly observe assessor performance to check how they approach working with apprentices/learners. This ensures a consistent approach to delivery is maintained by all.



Regular observations are carried out for all staff. Conclusions from these observations, along with information identified in staff appraisals, is used to inform and design a customised programme of training and development over the year.



Detailed annual observations of all delivery staff are carried out to ensure that they maintain their competency. Results are recorded and linked to individual appraisals. This process supports staff development in their practice.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited evidence of staff observations being carried out
- There is no formal or personal appraisal of staff members



**Lisa Daniel,**  
Modern Apprentice, Leonardo

# Effectiveness of Partnerships

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Use partners effectively to support learners who need extra/specialist support and can evidence instances where this has happened.
- Support the transition of school pupils e.g. Foundation Apprentice to MA (where this is relevant), or EF participant into MA. They will be able to evidence instances where this has happened.
- Use partners effectively to support the progression of their learners into the next stages of learning and/or employment. Staff will be able to provide evidence that this has happened on a few occasions.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Proactively seek out partnerships and expect their staff to routinely support progression for their learners into, through and out of their provision. They will support all their learners in this way.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of these relationships and the impact on progression and success for their learners.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Links are developed with other training providers and colleges to identify strong individuals completing, e.g., National Progression Awards or Employability programme with a view of progressing them onto the MA programme.



A directory of support organisations is utilised to advise and signpost apprentices/learners, when they disclose a health condition or additional need. This ensures that apprentices/learners are appropriately supported where required.



Strong links with local agencies who can support holistic needs are developed. This allows apprentices/learners to be supported with training relevant to each locality and specific learning opportunities.

## Areas for Improvement

- Employers do not have enough detailed information on organisations who offer support to apprentices/learners with additional support needs
- Provider does not have a clear progression pathway from EF providers to their MA programme
- Provider has limited engagement with schools
- Provider has no means of measuring effectiveness of partnerships
- Provider has no strategy for developing new partnership opportunities
- Provider lacks links with external partners who support additional support needs
- Provider unaware of sub-contractor partnerships
- Some apprentices/learners are not aware of further progression opportunities
- The provider has a limited range of external partnerships

# Management of Sub-contractors

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have in place, and effectively implement, appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the quality of delivery of sub-contracted provision.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Be able to demonstrate that their sub-contractors:
  - Comprehensively review provision in accordance with SDS quality standards; and
  - Implement improvements as required by the primary contractor
- Demonstrate (as the primary contractor) that they are effectively reviewing and monitoring the quality of sub-contracted provision.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Robust due diligence checks are undertaken prior to entering in to contracts with sub-contractors. Sub-contractors are asked to provide assurances in the form of their own self assessment documents, performance data, evidence of staff qualifications, centre accreditation certificates, EV reports and staff handbook. This demonstrates a clear commitment of the provider to the responsibility as prime contractors for the SDS funded provision.



In order to ensure that sub-contractors have the most up-to-date information about contract performance and updates from partner agencies, and to enable sub-contractors to meet and network, sub-contractor information and networking events are held every year. These events are well attended by the sub-contractors and are found to be useful.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited documentation of expected training delivery by sub-contractors. No standards are set regarding on and off the job learning, the content of initial assessment or delivery of core skills
- There is limited monitoring of sub-contractor performance and limited evidence that EV results are reviewed
- Provider is unaware of external partnerships that their sub-contractors utilise
- There is no discussion with sub-contractors over CPD, particularly related to equality groups
- Sub-contractors have limited opportunity to engage in the self-assessment process or share best practice
- There is no effective process for seeking apprentice/learner and employer views on sub-contractors and provider led survey feedback is not disaggregated by sub-contractor
- Sub-contractors do not share their survey results from apprentices/learners and employers with provider
- There is no apparent documented process for assessing and selecting sub-contractors





**Hanna Muir,**  
Modern Apprentice, CCG

# Leadership and Quality Culture



# Developing the Young Workforce

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Consider their performance in relation to results for under-represented groups and put in place at least one or two measures to improve equality outcomes (starts/achievement rates etc).
- Ensure measures implemented are proportionate to the nature and size of their SDS contract.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Proactively design their business model to improve recruitment and achievement of under-represented groups.
- Proactively recruit Foundation Apprentices through partnership arrangements in their MA contract where this is relevant.

## Examples of Effective Practice



There has been successful engagement with an SDS Equality Executive regarding recruitment of apprentices/learners from each of the underrepresented groups.



An action plan was developed to increase recruitment from under-represented groups. This includes engagement with schools and agencies who support individuals. Outcomes and actions from key activities are documented, allowing tracking of successes and providing a basis to determine future activities.



Diversity is promoted using social media, enabling engagement with employers and apprentices/learners. This messaging also demonstrates an inclusive message to potential apprentices/learners.



Engagement with local schools, including organising learning programmes, has resulted in effective partnerships. Several individuals have progressed from school onto training provision.

## Areas for Improvement

- Provider has limited engagement with schools
- Provider has limited knowledge of sub-contractor engagement with key equality groups
- Provider has little or no engagement with employers regarding diverse recruitment
- Recruitment and marketing materials do not include equality promoting content
- There is limited evidence of positive action to address representation of one or more equality groups



# Labour Market Intelligence

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Be able to demonstrate that they have considered current labour market intelligence in formulating their bid. This should be proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Demonstrate that regular review of the local/sectoral and/or national labour market underpins their SDS bid and their delivery responds to market requirements.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Local and national labour market intelligence is used to successfully influence provision. This allows for identified needs, such as an increase in staff in particular sectors, to be identified.



Information gathered from local employers on their needs is used to source the most appropriate and cost-effective sub-contractor for the specified provision.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited evidence of use of Labour Market Intelligence



**Declan Gray,**  
Modern Apprentice, Glasgow Life

# Strategic Engagement

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have a clear way of communicating with strategic partners that is effective and informs improvement in their service.
- Be able to provide examples of how this works for them.
- What they do will be proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Actively seek to improve their strategic engagement with partners and can demonstrate how this has led to improvements in their provision.

## Examples of Effective Practice



There is active engagement with a wide range of stakeholders (incl. Scottish Government, SDS, Awarding Bodies, Sector Skills Councils and other Training Providers). This allows for an understanding of policy drivers and is beneficial in informing strategy and focus.



Cost-benefit analysis of strategic engagement (e.g. attendance at representative body events) is frequently carried out. This ensures staff resources are targeted at activities that will provide maximum benefit for training delivery.



Engagement with local employers ensures that the specific provision offered effectively meets the needs of employers and the local economy.



Collaborative strategic working has been undertaken in response to the skills shortages, and challenges identified within the industry. This helps identify recruitment demand.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited communication with sub-contractors at a strategic level



**Hannah Falconer,**  
Modern Apprentice, Arcadia Nursery



# Staff

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have sufficient staff with the required skill set available to deliver, proportionate to the size of their SDS contract, geographical spread etc.
- Be able to react to challenges such as staff illness, staff leaving or premises issues to ensure learners are not disadvantaged because of these or other challenges.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have a clear contingency strategy and plans in place for challenges such as loss of staff or a centre being out of operation, that can be implemented quickly and effectively.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Staff duties are segregated between areas such as recruitment, administration, assessment, management and central support services. The different teams have clear demarcation and roles and responsibilities.

## Areas for Improvement

- Provider has no staffing contingency plans
- Staff roles and responsibilities are not clearly documented
- There is some disruption to training delivery due to staffing issues



**Bethany Bass,**  
Modern Apprentice, AJ Engineering

# Management and Support of Staff

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Provide staff with a tailored induction programme that ensures staff fully understand the expectations of the SDS contract, and programmes they are delivering as part of the contract.
- Have an appropriate and well-planned workload for each staff member to allow them to deliver good quality work-based learning.
- Have an effective way of monitoring the work of staff that is proportionate to the size and nature of the provider



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Demonstrate proactive and innovative measures in staff induction to showcase good practice in delivery of work-based learning including; preparing delivery, delivering to a high standard and embedding equality outcomes.
- Ensure that staff are empowered, and time set aside for them to inform future innovation in delivery.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Feedback is sought on the staff induction process. This has resulted in effective changes being made and the process being more tailored to the individual's pace.



Comprehensive documented monthly 1:1 'check in' meetings take place between assessors and management to discuss areas such as targets, what's going well, issues etc. The discussions also allow for dialogue around strategic goals and how staff are contributing to them, how any recent development activity has been put into practice and the impact this has had on their everyday work.



New members of staff can 'buddy up/shadow' current staff. This enables them to become familiar with the role and expectations

## Areas for Improvement

- High staff workload and/or lack of workload monitoring impacts the depth of engagement in different areas or apprentice/learner support
- New assessors lack a comprehensive induction
- Staff effectiveness is impacted by visits being cancelled at short notice
- Staff have little understanding of the company's strategic direction
- There are limited opportunities for staff to inform improvements in processes and procedures
- There is no formal process for capturing ideas generated by staff

# Staff Development

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Ensure that all staff undertake mandatory CPD and develop their staff in accordance with each individual's development needs.
- Provide examples of how staff CPD has improved their work-based learning provision.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have a methodical and proportionate approach to identifying staff CPD needs, and to cascading and measuring the impact of staff CPD.
- Ensure all relevant staff have undertaken equality and other mandatory CPD that informs how they deliver work-based learning provision.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Staff Development Days are held frequently. These are an effective means of understanding key priorities and how each individual role supports the overall strategy.



An Equality and Diversity Committee has been formed, which provides a range of staff with a platform to discuss and agree on E&D issues.



Staff are allocated individual CPD budgets for their development. This helps to support them in a holistic way to be effective in their roles.



All staff complete a survey to indicate their preferred method of training. This ensures training delivery meets the needs of individual staff.



Assessors participate in Apprentices' training covering safeguarding, child protection, cognitive behavioural therapy and suicide intervention strategies. This supports their development and enables them to support Apprentices effectively.

## Areas for Improvement

- Lack of opportunity to attend external events (e.g. Awarding Body forums)
- Low attendance at equality and diversity meetings limits effectiveness in staff understanding of SDS priorities in this area
- Peer to peer observations are sporadic or not replicated across the business
- There is no evidence of planned training and support for staff moving into new roles
- Staff do not receive adequate training on equality and diversity
- Staff are unaware of CPD training they have completed
- There is limited evidence of how the impact of CPD training is measured

# Effective Self-assessment

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Ensure that the views of all interested parties (staff, learners, partners, employers) that are involved in the SDS contract contribute to the self-assessment process.
- Ensure their approach to self-assessment captures the views of all those with a vested interest in the delivery.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Dedicate time to self-assessment on a regular and routine basis.
- Clearly identify the additional value of undertaking self-assessment and show how it contributes to improvement of their provision.
- Demonstrate the value of all staff being involved in regular self-assessment activity.

## Examples of Effective Practice



A record of activities is maintained and informs discussions around self-assessment. All staff are involved in this process.



Working groups are formed across staff teams when completing the self-assessment. This ensures the self-assessment is fully reflective of delivery and supports the process of continuous improvement.



All sub-contracted staff members are involved in the self-assessment process, ensuring the input of all stakeholders in the process of continuous improvement.

## Areas for Improvement

- Employers, sub-contractors or other stakeholders have no involvement in the provider's self-assessment process
- There is limited staff involvement in self-assessment process
- There is no staff involvement in self-assessment process



# Innovation and Change

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Provide examples of how they seek out innovation and ideas and how these have been incorporated into provision.
- Ensure measures implemented are proportionate to the nature and size of their SDS contract.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have a policy of actively seeking out best practice, innovation and new ideas and incorporating them into their provision.
- Provide clear evidence of several examples of where this has been done.

## Examples of Effective Practice



New innovations in related sectors, or in the wider training world are discussed at regular team and standardisation meetings and consideration is given to how this may be adopted as practice.



There is a strong culture of continuous improvement embedded, including involving all staff with innovation generation and implementation. An improvement log documents instances of innovation.

## Areas for Improvement

- Provider organises innovative events for apprentices/learners but does not seek feedback on them



**Kurt Crow,**  
Modern Apprentice, Plantiecrub Enterprises





**Lorena Cocozza,**  
Modern Apprentice, HSBC

# Outcomes and Impacts





# SDS Key Performance Indicators

## Theme Information

### A Good Provider may:

- Meet the benchmark (average) level of SDS KPIs in almost all of their SDS funded provision including:

- outcomes;
- outputs; and
- qualifications benchmark levels

for that programme/ framework as set out in the current year's contracting strategy.

### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Exceed the benchmark (average) level of SDS KPIs including:

- outcomes;
- outputs; and
- qualifications benchmark levels

for that programme/ framework as set out in the current year's contracting strategy.

- Have clearly demonstrated that they analyse and utilise the data to inform continuous improvement.

## Examples of Effective Practice



Achievement rates are broken down by MA framework and the under-represented groups. This enables comparisons of performance to national averages.



Information on key performance indicators is gathered in a way to enable in-depth analysis. This allows for an understanding of performance in a variety of segmentation areas including frameworks, achievement and dropout rates, gender, ethnicity, self-identified impairment or learning difficulty, and age.

## Areas for Improvement

- Certain Performance Indicators have fallen or are lower than national benchmark
- Performance rates are not broken down to different framework programme levels
- Provider has some frameworks with several inactive records



**Adam Horne,**  
Modern Apprentice, Asda

# Employer feedback; analysis and use of results

## Theme Information

### A Good Provider may:

- Demonstrate regular gathering of evidence of how satisfied employers are with their training provision.
- Ensure measures taken are proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS provision.
- Source feedback which may be explicitly sought through the provider's own formal processes, or it may come from SDS monitoring or other sources, but it has been gathered, quantified and analysed.
- Have feedback which demonstrates employers are largely satisfied with their relationship with, and delivery of training/assessment by, the provider and that they see additional value for their business in the provider's activity.

### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Take proactive steps to systematically gather and analyse feedback on satisfaction of provision to inform improvements.
- Set themselves targets which fit with the size and nature of their SDS contract.
- Have feedback from employer(s) which demonstrates that all or almost all are satisfied with the delivery of training and assessment by the provider and employers see additional value for their business in the provider's activity.
- Have feedback which demonstrates that employers' views contribute to training improvement.

## Areas for Improvement

- Current methods of distribution of employer surveys have resulted in a low/unrepresentative response rate
- Sub-contractors do not share survey results with provider
- Survey feedback is not used effectively to inform improvements to delivery (this includes no analysis, benchmarking, disaggregation)
- The design and/or timing of employer surveys limits meaningful feedback on all areas of the training provision (relating to quality of questions asked (e.g. yes/no answers) or limited questions)
- There is no formal and comprehensive process for surveying employers
- There is no record or analysis of repeat business trends which would demonstrate employer satisfaction

## Examples of Effective Practice



The continued development of a comprehensive database of employers enables measurement of the level of repeat business.



Feedback from learner and employer satisfaction surveys is analysed with charts and graphs produced. The results are utilised to compare findings year on year, displaying the levels of satisfaction and areas for improvement. Benchmarks are set to try and increase the number of completed surveys.



# Learner feedback; analysis and use of results

## Theme Information

### A Good Provider may:

- Be able to demonstrate regular gathering of evidence of learner satisfaction in their training provision.
- Ensure measures taken are proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.
- Source feedback which may be explicitly sought through the provider's own formal processes, or it may come from SDS monitoring or other sources, but it has been gathered, quantified and analysed.
- Have feedback which demonstrates learners are largely satisfied with their relationship with, and delivery of training/assessment and support from, the provider. Learners believe this has contributed to their skills development beyond the workplace role itself (i.e. that the provider has added value).

### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Take proactive steps to systematically gather and analyse feedback on satisfaction in provision to inform improvements.
- Set themselves appropriate targets which are proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.
- Have feedback from learners which demonstrates that all or almost all are satisfied with the provider's service and they recognise that the provider has added value to their skills development in the workplace.
- Have feedback which demonstrates that learners are listened to and their input contributes to the continuous improvement of the provider's service.

## Areas for Improvement

- Current methods of distribution of apprentice/learner surveys have resulted in a low/unrepresentative response rate
- Sub-contractors do not share survey results with provider
- Survey feedback is not used effectively to inform improvements to delivery
- The design and/or timing of apprentice/learner surveys limits meaningful feedback on all areas of the training provision
- There is no formal and comprehensive process for surveying apprentices/learners

## Examples of Effective Practice



Apprentices/learners provide feedback on the assessment undertaken via a questionnaire. The questionnaire gives apprentices/learners the opportunity to feedback on a range of areas, such as how they applied the learning to the workplace, what improvements could make the learning experience better and if the learning has improved their ability. This helps them remain focussed and the information provided informs areas for improvement.

# SDS Equality Requirements

## Theme Information

### A Good Provider may:

- Demonstrate that they have reviewed their performance relating to recruitment and retention of key equality groups and can demonstrate some improvement for at least one equality group as a result of action that they have taken.
- Analyse their performance in relation to equality groups and use that intelligence to inform improvements for the future.

### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Set appropriate equality recruitment targets and demonstrate a clear commitment to recruiting a more diverse range of learners.
- Demonstrate clear improvements in representation of equality groups through targeted action.
- Demonstrate improvements in success rates for these groups on their programmes

## Examples of Effective Practice



Clear internal benchmarks are set in relation to representation of the key SDS target groups. This enables the tracking of performance and allows rich insights to be made.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited/declining progress in the recruitment/participation of one or more key equality group
- Provider does not analyse/benchmark equality performance or set targets for improvement



**Rosie Wilkins,**  
Modern Apprentice, The Torricon



# Awarding and Industry Body Requirements

## Theme Information



### A Good Provider may:

- Have few or only minor awarding body compliance breaches requiring action
- Demonstrate that they are considering external verification visit reports and their required actions/recommendations to inform improvements in their provision.



### An Excellent Provider may also:

- Have no actions required by awarding bodies in their reports and few or no recommendations to be acted upon from reviews undertaken. They may also have areas where good practice has been identified.

## Examples of Effective Practice



A system is in place to record, disseminate and action feedback from awarding body external verification reports. The number and detail of any recommendations, actions and identified areas of good practice are recorded. Details are disseminated during management and standardisation meetings and implementation of recommendations is tracked. This helps to ensure that awarding body requirements are met.

## Areas for Improvement

- There is limited evidence of how results from External Verification visits are monitored
- There is limited evidence confirming checks are carried out on Awarding Body accreditation and EV results of sub-contractors



**Robert McLatchie,**  
Modern Apprentice, Scottish Leather Group