

A photograph of four workers standing in a large warehouse. They are wearing dark blue or black work uniforms with reflective silver stripes on the sleeves and legs. The workers are wearing safety glasses. The warehouse has high ceilings with exposed steel beams and numerous wooden pallet racks filled with boxes and materials. The floor is concrete with yellow safety lines. A teal banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

Quality Assurance Analysis 23-24

Overview

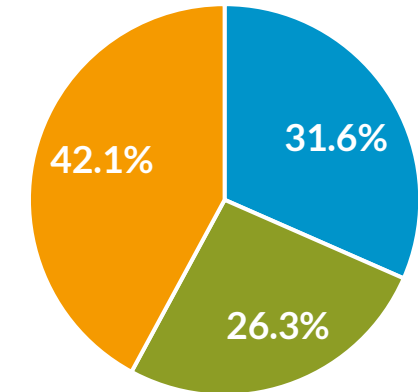
Outline of Report

During 2023/24, 19 Quality Assurance Reviews of providers delivering Modern Apprenticeship provision were carried out. This report outlines the combined findings from the reviews, providing selected examples of effective practice and some points of consideration based on the areas for improvement (AFIs) identified in the reviews.

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

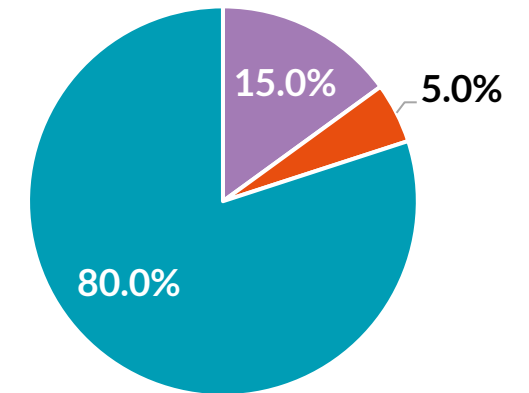
There were many strengths observed, including over 35 areas of highlighted effective practice. In addition, there were over 210 AFIs noted across the reviews.

Size of providers
reviewed in 23/24 Quality
Assurance Reviews



■ Large ■ Medium ■ Small

Type of providers
reviewed in 23/24 Quality
Assurance Reviews



■ Employer ■ Public Sector
■ Training Provider

Overview

Structure of Report

Effective practice examples have been identified to inform continuous improvement actions. **The small selection of effective practice in this report is not a comprehensive list of all the areas in which providers are doing well.**

The Areas for Improvement have been categorised in line with the six 6 topics areas within the [SDS Self-Evaluation / Quality Action Plan Guidance for Modern Apprenticeship Provision](#). These have been presented as points of consideration for you to reflect on when evaluating your own delivery.

Please note as Fair Work First was not part of the scope for previous Quality Assurance Reviews, the Areas for Improvement highlighted under this topic are not an exhaustive list of considerations in this area.

Six topic areas - SDS Self-Evaluation / Quality Action Plan Guidance

Standard	Topic
Service Delivery This section is about the delivery of work-based learning. Within this you need to consider not only how you do this but how effective it is and why.	Initial Assessment and Recruitment
	Learning and Assessment Planning/Learner Goal Setting and Progress
	Employer Involvement
	Equality
Leadership and Quality Culture This section is about how your leadership team manage and plan your delivery. It often (but not always) relates to the wider leadership and management of an organisation where work-based learning is not the only thing that happens in that organisation. The important point is that you consider how leadership and management is applied to SDS funded work-based learning provision.	Continuous Improvement in Delivery & Performance
	Fair Work First (FWF)



**Points to consider / Effective Practice
Quality Assurance Reviews 23-24**

Points to consider / Effective Practice

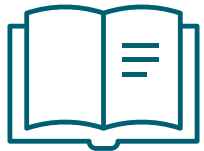
The following pages in the report outline **points to consider in your own delivery** and **Effective Practice examples**, identified across Quality Assurance Reviews 23-24. These are presented across the **six self-evaluation topics**.



Initial Assessment and Recruitment



Equality



Learning and Assessment Planning/Learner Goal Setting and Progress



Continuous Improvement in Delivery & Performance

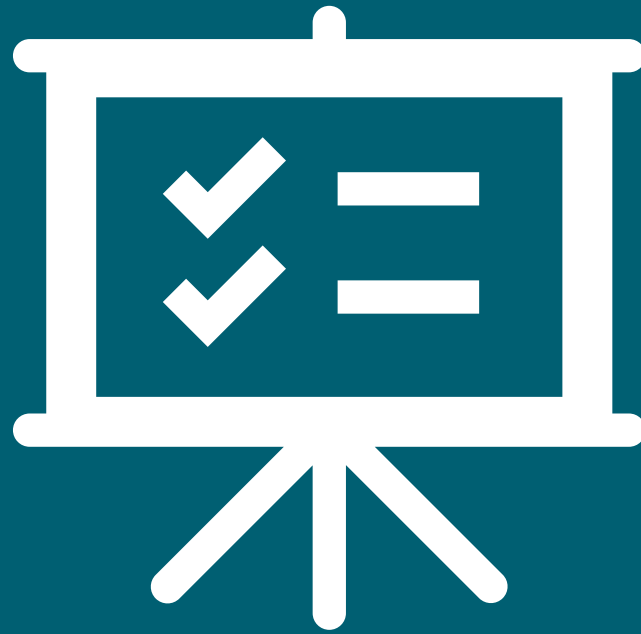


Employer Involvement



Fair Work First (FWF)

Initial Assessment and Recruitment



Initial Assessment and Recruitment



Self-evaluation question: How effective is your approach and methodology to appropriately match individuals to Modern Apprenticeship pathways, ensuring that prior learning and tailored support needs are met?

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

- Initial assessment processes are sufficiently robust to ensure apprentices are matched to a suitable qualification which meets their learning needs and expectations
- Employers are involved in the recruitment process for apprentices
- Recruitment materials reference appropriate Scottish qualifications
- Initial assessment processes are documented and clearly outlined for staff
- Recognition of prior learning (e.g. core skills) occurs during initial assessment processes for all apprentices

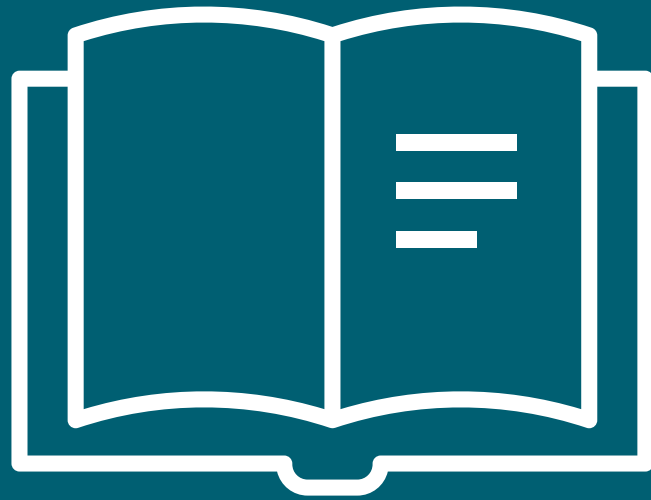
Kwik-Fit Limited

Effective Practice – Initial Assessment and Recruitment

Kwik Fit recruitment team support the provider well in identifying potential apprentices for the programme. A well-planned three stage recruitment and initial assessment (IA) process is in place. Individuals are invited to complete a robust on-line application for apprenticeship posts. Along with the application, they have the opportunity attach a video recording of themselves and this can provide valuable insight into an individual's personality and creativity, as well as their technical abilities. At this stage, the recruitment team will scope and grade the travel distance and time between an individual's home and place of work to ensure this is feasible for them. Effective use is made of a number of systems to feed into the IA process, such as 'Insights' profiling system to help identify personality and learning preferences, and functional skills tests. Consideration is given to the information gathered and this ensures applicants are suitable for the second phase of the process.

The recruitment team undertake valuable telephone interviews with applicants at the second phase of the process. They will confirm areas such as travel distance, strengths and weaknesses and supported needs and reaffirm all answers given. Individuals are provided with top line information on the apprenticeship, such as programme delivery, salary and residential element of training and this ensures they are aware of all aspects of the role. To prepare applicants for the next phase, they are offered sound advice such as to review the company website; interview tips; and hints on what to wear which sets them up well for their final interview. Positive steps are taken to ensure applicants can make an informed choice before committing to the apprenticeship programme. For the final stage of recruitment/ IA, applicants attend the training academy where they undertake a comprehensive face-to-face interview with an operations manager, and on occasion, receive input from employers. As part of this phase, they receive an informative tour of the academy, meet the technical trainers, and are provided further helpful information on the programme and delivery. Together, these well-planned stages ensure applicants are prepared for embarking on the apprenticeship programme.

Learning and Assessment Planning / Learner Goal Setting and Progress



Learning and Assessment Planning / Learner Goal Setting and Progress



Self-evaluation question: How effective are your approaches to learning and assessment planning; induction; learner goal setting and progress?

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

Induction

- Induction and associated resources are clear on relevant programme expectations for apprentices
- Employers are involved in the induction process for apprentices
- Feedback on the induction is gathered immediately after it takes place
- Your apprentices are clear on the roles and responsibilities of key contacts e.g. assessor
- Assessors are involved within the induction

Learning and Assessment Planning

- Learning and assessment planning is effective for apprentices (e.g. sufficient workplace opportunities, appropriate levels of workload, and able to gather evidence)
- Employers are involved in the planning of learning and assessment and are clear how individual learning plans integrate within the workplace
- Your apprentices have ownership of their own learner journey (including unit choice and assessment planning)
- You promote flexibility in approaches to learning and assessment (e.g. options for face-to-face contact)

Learning and Assessment Planning / Learner Goal Setting and Progress

Points to consider

Consider in your own delivery that:

Learner goal setting and progress

- Employers have awareness of and participation in the progress review process
- Employers receive copies of progress review notes and receive sufficient information
- Approaches to progress reviews are consistent for all apprentices
- Your apprentices may require greater one-to-one support from their assessor
- Your apprentices should be aware of employer feedback to the progress review process

Transferable Skills

- Your apprentices understand core skills and are aware of their requirement and value
- Core skills are delivered using naturally occurring evidence (including within sub-contracted provision)

Resources

- Internal policies relating to the MA programme are up-to-date and reflective of qualifications in Scotland.
- Resources support your apprentice(s) to understand of SDS's role in the apprenticeship programme
- Employers have access to digital learning/assessment platforms to optimise their input to planning and delivery
- Apprentices and employers views are considered on level of face-to-face delivery (as opposed to remote)
- Provider staff are aware of the full functionality of the online learning platforms used by apprentices

GTG Training

Effective Practice - Induction



There is a robust process in place that provides apprentices with a thorough and detailed introduction to their training programme. Inductions are carried out face to face as the preferred option and scheduled to fit with apprentice and employer availability. Comprehensive induction booklets, tailored specifically for each occupational sector, provide learners with clear information on a range of topics including - GTG training centre rules, expectations of apprentices (standards and behaviours), policies e.g. equality and diversity, plagiarism, appeals and complaints, SDS validation processes, qualification structure, assessment processes, introduction to e-portfolio, roles and responsibilities, key contacts, My World of Work, and welfare information and links to SPACE (GTG's online health and wellbeing app).

Employers are fully involved in the induction process and supported very well to understand their role in apprentice learning. An excellent Mentor Guide has been developed that explains the purpose of a mentor in the workplace; the responsibilities of a mentor; a breakdown of the framework/ qualification; the anticipated timelines for apprentice progress and completion of each element; an overview of Smart Assessor and One File e-portfolios; suggested questions to ask apprentices when discussing their progress and a list of key support contacts in GTG. For those apprentices employed by the Arnold Clark Group, a helpful induction video provides apprentices and their parents/families with an overview of the employer, GTG training facilities and what to expect during their apprenticeship. Feedback from apprentices demonstrates that they value the induction process. As a result of the clear and comprehensive induction, apprentices have a clear understanding of what to expect during training and the support available to help them achieve their goals.

GTG Training

Effective Practice - Meta skills



While not a mandatory requirement of the frameworks offered, GTG have embraced opportunities to support apprentices to reflect on meta-skills development. An excellent example of this was noted by the assessment team in relation to automotive apprentices. A cross-disciplinary project encouraged learners to develop their meta-skills and reflect on their learning. Automotive apprentices were tasked with working collaboratively to restore a Mini car. Body-shop apprentices and light vehicle apprentices used their different skills to assess the damage on the body work, diagnose mechanical faults and agree a restoration plan.

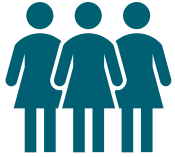
Collaboration with Arnold Clark digital print staff further developed ideas for “wrapping” the vehicle in livery which outlined the various meta-skills which they had developed, thus advertising meta-skills. On conclusion of the project, a newly restored vehicle showcased the meta-skills that the group considered they had developed including – problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, and self-management.

The project highlighted the relevance of meta-skills both within and beyond the workplace and provided a unique opportunity to promote development of meta-skills through a vehicle restoration project.

Employer Involvement



Employer Involvement



Self-evaluation question: How well do you involve employers and their staff (or your own staff if you have an “employer” contract) in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of your apprenticeship provision?

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

- Employers are involved in the development of the learning, and the delivery to support apprentices to successfully complete their qualification.
- Employers have access to digital learning/assessment platforms to optimise their input to planning and delivery
- Employers are involved in the following areas:
 - the recruitment process, including supporting diverse recruitment.
 - planning of learning and assessment
 - participating in the induction for apprentices.
 - support of apprentices with additional support needs
 - the progress review process
 - the self-evaluation process
 - providing feedback to providers.

Employer Involvement Effective Practice

Di Maggio's Group Limited - Assessment planning is very effectively managed by the provider and integrates well with employer led activity. Each apprentice has a learning and assessment plan which is individualised to their specific needs. Excellent working relationships are maintained between the delivery team and employers and because of this, contact time with apprentices is particularly easy to arrange. The assessor is provided with copies of apprentice rotas one week in advance and this facilitates them in scheduling learning extremely well. It allows assessors to take account of apprentice working patterns and peak periods and this enables them to visit restaurants at times which maximise opportunities for observations of practice.

SEETEC Outsource Training and Skills Limited - The introduction to the MA programme is integrated seamlessly into the employer's induction and training for new employees, setting the first impression of the programme as an important aspect of their job role. The provider and employer worked collaboratively over recent years to review and improve induction arrangements, aiming to give apprentices the best possible start to their learning journey. This is demonstrated well through apprentice feedback, maintaining high levels of satisfaction on the introduction to the programme in recent years.

Employer Involvement Effective Practice

GTG - The provider is highly effective in utilising employer intelligence, which informs their development and planning of future training provision. GTG take appropriate steps to explore and understand their ecosystem and have successfully developed a clear work-based learning strategy that considers the changing needs of their customers. For example, by researching the percentage of technicians who were qualified to work on electric vehicles and the growth in sales of such vehicles, GTG identified a future skills gap and a growth in employer demand for training in this area. This informed their strategy to develop a dedicated electric / hybrid vehicle training area. Similarly, research into the shortage of lorry drivers across the United Kingdom led to freight logistics apprentices being offered the opportunity to upgrade their licence category, increasing their career progression opportunities and meeting a growing employer demand for their skills.

Equality



Equality



Self-evaluation question: How effective are you at working with employers to raise awareness of those with protected characteristics and/or care experienced backgrounds to influence recruitment and engagement of a diverse workforce?

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

Supporting equality groups

- Employers understand how to support apprentices with additional support needs

Diverse recruitment approaches

- Employers are engaged in recruitment of apprentices from under-represented groups
- Partnerships are established with equality partners to promote vacancies to under-represented groups

Outcomes

- Analysis is undertaken of the performance of sub-contractors in relation to participation rates for key equality groups
- You analyse the participation rates from equality groups, including individuals from a BME background, individuals who are care experienced, and / or individuals who have a self-declared impairment, health condition or learning disability.
- You review progress with addressing gender imbalance on heavily segregated frameworks

Ambition Centre for Training Limited

Effective Practice - Diverse Recruitment



Ambition has a clear strategy and commitment to supporting youth employment with positive actions designed to address under-representation of the key target groups. Partnerships with its employer network, local schools and DYW groups have been created to support delivery of pre-apprenticeship training. The most recent example through Lime Salons and four Fife High Schools to deliver a Skills for Work programme involving an interview, salon taster sessions and accreditation of core skills. This enables young people to make informed career choices and provides a clear pathway to employment - to date, of six participants, two have progressed onto an apprenticeship, and has been highlighted as effective practice by SQA, also receiving favourable local media profile. In addition, the provider is working with an ethnic minority hairdresser to develop learning materials suitable for more diverse hair types and support their achievement of hairdressing qualifications. Through partners, there are links with Pebbles (a charity providing residential care, education and therapy for children and young people) and the provider's website and social media channels showcase males into hairdressing through blogs which are designed to inspire and challenge stereotypes. Such activities help promote opportunities to those from diverse backgrounds and circumstances and support recruitment from the widest pool of available talent.

Magnox Limited

Effective Practice - Diverse Recruitment



The provider is extremely effective in supporting young people to progress and raise awareness of their MA programme. Benefitting from their partnership with North Highland College, they engage with students where college staff have recommended the organisation. In addition, delivery staff and apprentices promote the MA by attending parents' evenings; STEM events; school links and career events, whilst also offering work and summer placements. This has allowed Magnox to raise awareness of the MA programme, with most apprentices coming directly from local schools, and in contract year 2021-22, two individuals who completed the work experience course then enrolled on the MA programme.

Continuous Improvement in Delivery & Performance



Continuous Improvement in Delivery & Performance



Self-evaluation question: How good is your performance and how good are you at monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of your delivery of Modern Apprenticeships?

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

Approach to Continuous Improvement

- Staff are involved in the self-evaluation process
- Employer(s), sub-contractor(s) or other stakeholder(s) are involved in the self-evaluation process
- Your self-evaluation references management arrangements for freelance or self-employed staff

Innovation

- You implement innovative ideas within your MA delivery

Effective partnerships

- You utilise local partners, schools, and Foundation Apprenticeship pipelines to support the transition of young people into a Modern Apprenticeship

Continuous Improvement in Delivery & Performance

Points to consider

Consider in your own delivery that:

Using perception (feedback) data:

- There is a systematic approach to gathering and analysing learner and employer feedback, including on specific points or aspects of the apprentices' journey
- You make effective use of survey feedback to inform improvements to delivery (such as analysis of trends or disaggregation)
- Approaches are in place to ensure a good response rate to feedback surveys
- You review trend data showing learner and employer satisfaction
- Delivery staff receive the results of feedback activity or formally input to improvement based on feedback
- You review questions within employer and learner surveys

Management of sub-contractors

- All sub-contractors understand and meet SDS quality expectations, with service level agreements
- You maintain an accurate record of sub-contractor organisations you work with during the contracting year and notify SDS of any changes
- Sub-contractor staff are clear on how they would access SDS resources
- You analyse the performance of sub-contractors in relation to participation rates for key equality groups

Use of Labour Market Information

- You use labour market information, such as SDS Skills Investment Plans or Regional Skills Assessments

Ambition Centre for Training Limited

Effective Practice - Effective Self-Evaluation



Ambition has a systematic approach to self-evaluation using the lenses of staff and key stakeholders. There is clear scheduling over the course of a year which enables the provider and its staff to plan and review its self-evaluation. The Quality Action Plan is a working document which is reviewed as part of the monthly meeting structure, thereby ensuring timely and effective responses. Having dedicated time supports the teams' reflective practice which is informed by feedback gathered from a number of sources including employers, apprentices, external verifiers and SDS. Apprentice and employer surveys are conducted bi-annually, the provider having reviewed delivery method and streamlined the content - the most recent of which has seen an improvement in the response rate to one third of employers and >40% of apprentices. The provider is responsive to feedback as exemplified by the numerous examples of enhancements to delivery. The impact of this is to ensure that the views of all invested in delivery are captured and demonstrates a clear commitment to improving the quality of provision

MI Technologies Limited

Effective Practice - Effective Self-Evaluation



Despite being a small team, MIT Training demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement. In order to ensure all staff engage in the process of self evaluation and continuous improvement, an invite is extended on an annual basis looking for staff to get involved. Once agreed, staff members become the “quality action team” and meet on a regular basis to discuss the Self-Evaluation and Quality Action Plan (SAQAP). The team use this time to review the Self-Evaluation, highlighting strengths and evaluating their approach to key processes, the results of which form the basis of their Quality Action Plan. The finalised document is shared and discussed with all remaining staff as part of the annual business planning meetings and staff appreciate this. A copy is held centrally within the company folder and accessible at all times.

The quality action team pro-actively engage with the SDS online SAQAP system mesma, ensuring it is current and up to date. They ensure the views of employers, apprentices and staff are taken account of utilising feedback and results from a range of areas, such as structured surveys; ad-hoc feedback; staff team meetings; and observations, which inform continuous improvement actions, as reflected in the SAQAP. This approach has resulted in a number of improvements being identified, some of which are at pilot stage, e.g., introduction of a learning styles template as part of initial assessment; a Quick Start guide at induction to streamline the process; safeguarding; and responding to employer needs by introduction of a more highly flexible workforce to accommodate shift patterns. Once formalised, all staff have the opportunity to engage with the Quality Action Plan as part of scheduled standardisation meetings and this enables them to reflect on the progress made. Staff find engagement in improvement practices beneficial as it presents them with the opportunity to identify and feed into improvement processes.

NHS Education for Scotland (NES)

Effective Practice - Innovation and Change

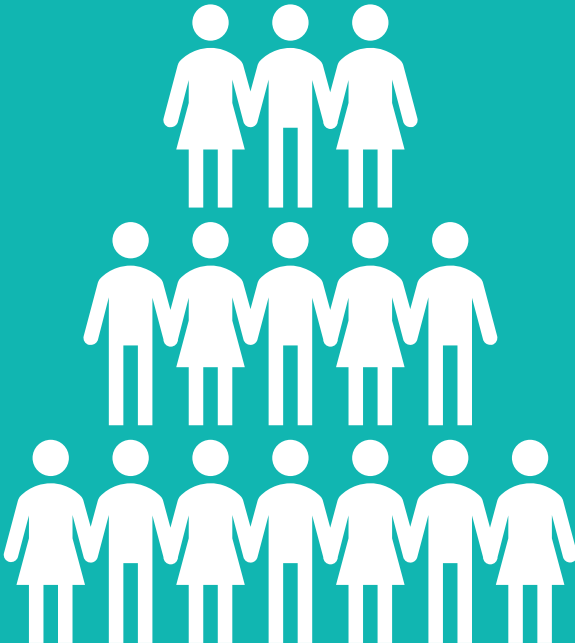


NES demonstrates agility and a positive approach to seeking innovative practice to deliver education and training. The Covid19 pandemic accelerated the rate of change with significant investment in digital learning solutions, key considerations relating to building in accessibility and inclusion for all. This was led by the Technology Enhanced Learning team who provide communities of practice for Educators and a suite of resources. User experience is monitored through evaluation and the provider was recognised in March 2021 as a finalist in the Scottish Apprenticeship Award's Innovation in Learning Provision category.

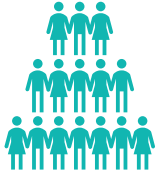
The provider and its staff are at the forefront of developing dental nursing and pharmacy technician qualifications, working closely with the Sector Skills Council, SQA and the regulatory bodies to ensure these meet the needs of Scottish practice. Such collaboration was recently recognised by the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK with the Senior Educator receiving a Fellowship Award for their key contribution to education and training, including participation in the review of the National Occupational Standards and development of the Foundation Programme and General Practice Learning Pathway for Pharmacy Technicians.

While not yet a requirement of the frameworks being delivered, the provider has started to explore the potential benefits of meta-skill development through staff completing relevant e-learning modules and engagement with other learning providers. Such activities ensure that the needs of stakeholders are met, resources are used in a sustainable way and provision is future focused.

Fair Work First



Fair Work First



Self-evaluation question: How effective are you at committing to Fair Work First Practices (FWF) for all employees whether permanent, temporary, or sub-contractors involved in the delivery of this contract? This should include current and planned actions that show how you will embed these practices during the lifetime of this contract.

Points to consider

The following are suggested enhancements based on our findings across provider Quality Assurance Reviews in 2023-24.

Consider in your own delivery that:

Investment in Workforce Development

- You consider performance appraisals of delivery staff or regular feedback provided to them
- You give staff time to focus on personal and organisational development
- You address low response rates to employer feedback surveys
- Staff have an awareness of CPD resources including those on SDS corporate website, and you have a clear method of measuring the impact of staff CPD activities

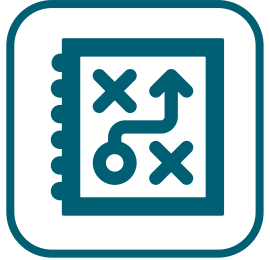
- Staff have opportunities, if they wish, to observe each other's delivery to enhance standardisation and approach

Management and support of staff

- Effective contingency planning is in place to ensure continuity of the MA programme in the event of unplanned absence/ staff leaving
- Staff understand the requirements of SDS funded provision, and the aims and objectives of the MA programme
- There are formal contractual arrangements in place clarifying responsibilities of self-employed assessors

Safety Training Solutions

Effective Practice - Management and Support of Staff



Staff feel informed, engaged, and well supported in their roles. Communication within their team is open and there is transparency with information shared to build trust and engagement. Staff feel empowered to make and suggest changes and feel their opinion is valued. It is clear that management value their team and appreciate their expertise and opinion. This was particularly clear during the process of designing an online management system and moving from their previous approach that staff felt could be improved. During the consultancy phase of designing this platform, management ensured all staff spoke with the designer to ensure the platform suited all. Staff interviewed valued this opportunity with one stating it encapsulated the overall dynamic of the team and how they operated. The software (Monday.com), allows staff to manage their diary, track progress reviews, and share updates alongside other functionalities. This is valued by most staff who see it as a resource which allows them to increase their efficiency and hold records in one area.

Feedback from assessors is that workloads are manageable, and they valued being able to work flexibly to manage their diary. Staff can visit learners face to face, however, have recently started utilising virtual meetings to reduce time spent travelling. Workloads are managed and considered by the two directors and in recent years the provider reduced MA intake due to demands on staff being too high and recruitment of staff not yet being completed. As a result, the delivery team is high performing with the staff dedicated, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the work they do.

NHS Education for Scotland (NES)

Effective Practice - Staff Development



A high priority is placed on learning and development with the range and scope of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities demonstrating that staff understand well a responsibility to support apprentices and their holistic needs. Staff are encouraged in their development through twice-yearly appraisal discussions with line managers. There are numerous opportunities to participate in training and CPD with a number of staff having completed Assessor / Verifier Awards and the majority of delivery staff have also completed relevant SDS modules to support their practice.

In partnership with SQA, the provider has recently created and launched a PDA award in Education, Training and Assessment at SCQF level 8. To date, eight Tutors have enrolled which will allow them to broaden their professional skills and knowledge and provides a progression onto attaining teaching qualifications if desired. While developed by the DCP workstream, its application is relevant for practitioners across all health and social care settings.

The Turas Learn platform hosts a wide range of resources including mandatory training renewed bi-annually and covering key policy and regulatory requirements such as ED&I (focusing on anti-racism in the current year), online safety and GDPR. A key feature of this open culture is the routine dissemination of learnings using Teams channels to generate ideas and agree a common approach which staff value and means they can proactively support apprentices and deliver training according to individual need. The provider's investment in its staff is appreciated by them, mutually beneficial, and ensures they can maintain their competency in key areas.

**Skills
Development
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Cover image – Apprentices at Score Group
Page 3 Image – Mandeep Singh, FES Group