**Commissioned Partner Handbook**

**2025 - 2026**

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**Working in partnership to help the Borough THRIVE**

The Council Plan ‘Play Your Part to Thrive’ outlines what can all do to tackle six key priorities. It sets out a new way of working with a focus on partnerships that really make a difference to everyone who lives and works in the Borough. By working together, we can achieve much more and truly make the borough thrive.

The wheel below shows six values that will guide our behaviour: teamwork, honesty, respect, innovation, value for money and empowerment (THRIVE).

The outer ring shows the 7Ps that we must adopt to ensure we can be a thriving Council and achieve our priorities



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**Introduction**

Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Skills and Employment Service is funded through the Government’s Adult Education Budget (AEB), the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and other funding providers, to offer a variety of learning programmes to meet the requirements of learners with wide ranging needs. We endeavour to support you as an adult learning provider to carry out your role effectively, enabling your tutors to deliver best practice in teaching, learning and assessment.

Please familiarise yourself with your contractual requirements and the quality processes explained in this handbook.

**Intent**

Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Skills and Employment Service is primarily designed to support adults who face challenges in reaching their life goals. Through tailored pathways of support and skills development, the service empowers individuals to enter the workforce or advance in their current roles. Examples of challenges individuals may face include low skill levels, physical or mental health conditions, learning disabilities or difficulties, and complex personal or family circumstances.

The Skills and Employment team is part of the Council’s Economic Growth service and delivers employment support, learning and skills provision across the borough.

**Our Intent** is to support targeted residents and their families to:

“Progress in life and work”

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Priority Areas (PAs)**

Key Performance Indicators are closely matched to the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and form the basis of our Quality Monitoring Processes. Performance against the KPIs is assessed during lesson visits, focussed learning walks, quality support visits and paperwork audits. Findings are used to identify the key Priority Areas on which to focus support for development in future.

For a full list of KPIs and the PAs for the 2025/26 academic year, please see your contract or request a copy of them from the Quality Team. It is essential that all tutors, and not just managers, are aware of the KPIs and PAs so they are able to plan effectively, prepare for lesson visits and learning walks, and ensure a quality learning experience for learners.

Key PAs may change from January 2026 in relation to actions identified in the Skills and Employment Self-Assessment Report. You will be informed of any changes that are made.

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**Tutor Mandatory Training and Qualifications**

All tutors delivering on a Skills and Employment contract must hold a recognised teaching qualification (minimum of Level 3 Award in Education and Training, formally PTLLS), and undertake regular CPD.

In addition to this, it is essential that all staff receive regular Safeguarding training, including PREVENT. This training must be renewed at least once every two years to ensure knowledge is current.

The Skills and Employment Team must be provided with a full record of each tutor’s qualification status, CPD record and DBS numbers. Tutors are not to deliver commissioned courses unless the Skills and Employment Team are in receipt of this information.

Please ensure that all tutors are aware of the current safeguarding procedures which are available on the [Policies and Procedures](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/further-and-higher-education/skills-and-employment/policies-and-procedures) section of the Skills and Employment web pages.

**Tutor Health and Wellbeing**

Dealing with stress can be complicated. Knowing how to handle pressure or where to get support can help us reduce the amount stress in our lives and improve our mental wellbeing.

We recognise that tutors will receive support for health and wellbeing from their line managers. The Skills and Employment Team recommend that you consider following the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. The links below provide useful information, tips and guides to help cope with everyday life. ​

[Make time](http://www.make-time.org/) - Five Ways to Wellbeing

[Cheshire West Health and Wellbeing](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/health-and-social-care/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing.aspx) – includes links to local health and wellbeing services

[Every Mind Matters](https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing/)

[Kind to your mind](http://kindtoyourmind.org/support-near-me/)

[NHS Choices](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx) - informative site covering all aspects of mental health.

[Mind](http://www.mind.org.uk/) - a mental health charity that can help you make choices about treatment, understand your rights or reach out to sources of support.

[One You](https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou) - find tips on how to stress less

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**Course Delivery**

There is a wealth of information and resources available on the [Skills and Employment web pages](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/further-and-higher-education/skills-and-employment/policies-and-procedures) to help support tutors with their course delivery such as in the areas listed below. It is strongly recommended that practitioners familiarise themselves with the broad range of available teaching and support resources.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Quality of education and the Education and Inspection Framework (EIF) | Tutor lesson visits and no-notice, focussed walkthroughs |
| Continuous quality improvement | Setting appropriate SMART Targets |
| Data protection | Continual Professional Development (CPD) |
| PREVENT and British Values | Complaints and grievances |
| Performance management | Course registration and completion paperwork |
| Careers and Education Guidance (CEG) & Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) | Safeguarding, including online safety and cyber-bullying |
| Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) | Embedding English and maths |
| Health and Safety | RARPAP and ILPs |
| Learning technologies | Quality monitoring cycle |
| Professional standards | Learner journey |

Contract Managers must also be aware of the requirements associated with course delivery so that appropriate support can be provided to tutors to ensure quality of provision and contract compliance.

**Performance Management**

The Skills and Employment Team can offer support to partners developing performance management systems for their staff. Termly tutor performance information is available and is based on data returned to us, for example from learner feedback forms. To receive performance information in a timely manner, it is essential that submission of course documents is not delayed.

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**Quality Improvement and Support**

The Quality Team will offer appropriate and ongoing support to you and your tutors to ensure you feel confident in meeting the contractual requirements relating to the quality of delivery.

As part of this support, partners will receive guidance regarding course paperwork completion, regular updates on relevant and topical issues related to teaching (for example OfSted requirements) and support with embedding of essential components such as maths, English, Safeguarding, IAG, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion etc.

The Quality Team will also provide supportive feedback to you based on findings of lesson visits, learning walks and paperwork audits, and assist, if required, with putting steps in place to make any necessary improvements.

**Tuition Fee Guidance**

The 2025/26 Subcontracting Policy and previous Supply Chain Fees are available. Please speak to a member of the Quality Team who will direct you to them.

Further information on the two streams of learning provision (Formula funded accredited provision, and grant funded Tailored Learning provision), the levels of funding (full funding, co-funding, or no funding) as well as definitions of terms can be found in your contract. Alternatively, please contact Gareth Dudley, Lead Contracting and Finance Officer, for advice.

**Data Returns**

The council reserves the right to define the information, timing and format of data returns that subcontracted providers are required to provide to prove fulfilment of this contract. Returns will be based on, but not limited to, the specification of the individual learner record as defined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

To enable prompt inputting of data into our system, fully completed paperwork should be returned to the Skills and Employment Team immediately after a course has finished.

Further information on data returns can be found in your contract (including a summary of MIS forms and timetable for submission), or by contacting Ben Watts, Senior Manager for Commissioning, Performance and Quality, or by visiting the [Skills Funding Agency website](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency)

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**Invoicing and payment process**

When your data returns are input and processed the actual earnings from the ESFA will generate income.  It is this actual income that will be confirmed to you, less the agreed subcontracting service costs. Actual values for invoicing will be confirmed to you via email on or near to the following dates:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 12 September 2025 | 12 January 2026 | 12 May 2026 |
| 13 October 2025 | 12 February 2026 | 12 June 2026 |
| 12 November 2025 | 12 March 2026 | 13 July 2026 |
| 12 December 2025 | 13 April 2026 | 12 August 2026 |

Further information about the invoicing process is available in your contract or by contacting Gareth Dudley, Lead Contracting and Finance Officer.

**Policies and Procedures**

The [Skills and Employment Team’s Policies and Procedures](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/further-and-higher-education/skills-and-employment/policies-and-procedures) are available online and can be adapted for your own use if required.

All tutors must be familiar with the policies and procedures, especially those relating to Safeguarding, including internet safety. Relevant information should be shared with learners as appropriate.

**Information, Advice and Guidance/Careers Education Guidance (IAG/CEG)**

The offer of impartial IAG, including CEG, is an essential component of course delivery and must be offered to all learners throughout their learning journey. There is a wide range of resources to help you deliver IAG/CEG on the [Skills and Employment web pages](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/further-and-higher-education/skills-and-employment/policies-and-procedures), including an IAG handbook for non-qualified practitioners. For further information on how you can offer this essential service, please contact the Quality Team.

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**Marketing of Commissioned Courses**

Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Skills and Employment Service – and all its provision – follows plain English and design accessibility guidelines.  The Skills and Employment Service has its own distinctive brand which should be used on all marketing materials delivered under contract.

The Quality team will provide contractors with templates for course posters.  Providers can edit the content but not make major changes to the design or layout. For any other marketing materials relating to contracted provision, please contact the Quality team to discuss.

We will regularly check your marketing materials meet our standards.  If they do not, we may ask to check all marketing relating to contracted provision prior to distribution.

Marketing information should be clear and accurate so that learners are aware of:

* the course content
* what they will achieve by the end
* progression opportunities available to them

For any Tailored Learning, marketing materials must make clear to learners that their course does not lead to or contribute to achievement of a regulated qualification or unit.

If appropriate, please also ensure that any materials or links advertising the Earnings Threshold show the revised salary for 2025/26 which is £25,750.

Further information can be found in your contract or obtained from the Quality Team.

**Useful Websites**

The following websites will support you further in offering a quality learning experience to your learners.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cheshire West and ChesterSkills and Employment Service | www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/further-and-higher-education/skills-and-employment |
| Education and Skills Funding Agency | [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency) |
| Government public services | [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)  |
| Learning and work Institute | [learningandwork.org.uk](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk) |
| Careers advice for adults | [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/)  |

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**Useful Contacts**

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| **Name** | **Role** | **Contact for** | **Email** |
| Matthew Smith | Skills and Employment Senior Manager and Safeguarding Lead | Safeguarding, Skills and Employment in general | matthew.smith@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Benjamin Watts | Manager - Commissioning, Performance and Quality, and Safeguarding Deputy | Safeguarding, contracts, eligibility and learner data paperwork, quality of delivery | benjamin.watts@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Lewis Belfield | Senior Officer – Ellesmere Port and Northwich Skills and Employment Hubs | Learning Hub management, course delivery and staffing | lewis.belfield@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Jo Talbot | Senior Officer – Chester and Winsford Skills and Employment Hubs  | Learning Hub management, course delivery and staffing | jo.talbot@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Jodie Ronan | Manager – Curriculum Development and Delivery | Safeguarding, curriculum development, tutor management | jodie.ronan@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| James Holden | Senior Officer Employment Support | Employment Support programmes | james.holden@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Gareth Dudley | Lead Contracting and Financial Performance Officer | Learner eligibility, paperwork submission deadline, course paperwork returns | gareth.dudley@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Olivia Arnold | Learner Data and Research Officer | Paperwork submission deadline, course paperwork returns | olivia.arnold@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk |
| Adam Yoxall | Performance Monitoring Officer | Contract payment calculation, payment notifications and supporting activities | adam.yoxall2@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Vicky Davis | Partnership, Quality and Curriculum Officer | Partner support Quality visits, OTLAs, walkthroughs, SARs, questions about course paperwork | vicky.davis@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Amta Xhetani | Partnership, Quality and Curriculum Officer | Partner support Quality visits, OTLAs, walkthroughs, SARs, questions about course paperwork | amta.xhetani@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Bethan Colburn | Partnership, Quality and Curriculum Support Officer | Tutor training updates e.g. PREVENT, DBS numbers, safeguarding, teaching qualifications, and course notifications | bethan.colburn@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Rob Badley | Adult Education Tutor Curriculum Lead – Essential skills | Programme design, delivery, IQA, learner-focused adult education | robert.badley@cheshirewest.gov.uk |
| Simon Dutton | UKSPF Project Co-ordinator and Commissioning Officer | Partner support and general queries regarding UKSPF | simon.dutton@cheshirewest.gov.uk |

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