



Quality Assurance And Improvement Framework Policy

Most recent update: 17 September 2025

Scope

This Quality Assurance (QA) framework covers all funded learning provision, delivered internally by Cheshire West & Chester Council's (CW&C) Skills and Employment (S&E) teams and externally by our sub-contracted partners. The policy explains the monitoring and support arrangements used to ensure the quality of delivery. The policy aligns with other quality monitoring frameworks including the Education Inspection Framework (updated September 2025), Ofsted and addresses the Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training May 2014.

Continuous Improvement

Our approach to quality aims to support all providers in delivering a learning programme which enables all our learners to progress in life and work.

Based on this framework of support, we expect providers to offer learners the highest quality learning experience possible and to continuously improve their offer so that learners maximise opportunities to progress in life and work.

Aim Of The Framework

This framework provides the criteria against which the Skills and Employment Quality team monitor the quality and development of their learning provision. The framework includes the current Education Inspection Framework (EIF) criteria -

- Quality of Education
 - intent
 - implementation
 - impact
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management

- together with our current priority areas for improvement. Provision is continuously monitored reviewed and improved in line with our Quality Improvement Cycle (see below). Progress is regularly updated and recorded in our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Outcomes from the QIP are used to inform our annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

See pages 12-15 of this document for full Quality Assurance (QA) framework criteria.



The Four Principles

- 1 Our sub-contracted partners are contractually responsible for delivering a quality learning experience and will have appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place to support learners.
- 2 The local authority will monitor QA arrangements across all provision – both internal and external delivery – against a range of activities and evidence.
- 3 Where QA arrangements are not sufficient, we will provide the support necessary to raise standards.
- 4 We will promote continuous improvement in our partners through support and challenge, as appropriate.

Tools To Help Us Monitor Quality And Support Continuous Improvement

To support our intent to enable learners to progress in life and work, our framework uses the following methods:

- Contractual requirements
Clear requirements for quality assurance and improvement laid out in the contract.
- Observations of practice
Carrying out regular themed learning walks and observations of teaching learning and assessment as well as moderation of sampled observations carried out by partners. Carry out in depth partner observations looking the full service that a subcontracted partner or direct delivery provides.
- Feedback from learners and stakeholders
Utilising a range of feedback opportunities for learners and partners so we can evaluate the service we provide.
- Quality groups and other face to faces support
Maintaining a framework of quality support visits (QSVs) to develop our partners' capacity to deliver learning and raise standards consistently. Sharing best practice across the area so that all providers and learners can benefit from consistently high standards.
- Audit and document review
Complying with local and statutory requirements eg Adult Skills Fund, Ofsted, Health and Safety Executive etc.
- Data monitoring and analysis
Rigorous analysis of learning data to measure performance, set targets and strategic direction. Maintaining a database of tutor qualifications and setting an annual target for improvement in the acquisition of appropriate teaching qualifications.
- Self assessment
Addressing our SAR development priorities through regular monitoring of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Assessment of our strengths and weaknesses and producing an annual self-assessment report (SAR). Sub-contracted partners self-assessment of their own



provision. Benchmarking S&E performance and standards in comparison with other learning provision.

Continuously reviewing our procedures and policies to ensure best practice. Production of a plan that sets our strategic direction and focuses on maintaining our strengths and addressing our weaknesses that is regularly monitored and updated. Implementing staff development both internally to meet key priorities and externally for our partners to ensure standards are driven up on a consistent basis including Health and Safety, and Equity Diversity and Inclusion.

How The Quality Assurance And Improvement Framework Works

As we work with a diverse range of partners we do not impose our own procedures on all of them as they may be at different stages of development and have different needs,. For example, a proportion of our provision may be sub-contracted to colleges who will each have their own rigorous and well-developed QA systems. For these partners, we ensure that these systems are applied consistently to CW&C funded provision and that there is compliance with our QA procedures.

Many of our other sub-contracted partners are smaller community and voluntary organisations who may be in the very early stages of developing their own systems. We will provide them with an appropriate QA proforma and other key resources to support all aspects of learning. These can be adapted to meet their own needs whilst ensuring a basic consistency of approach across all our partners.

This Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework is therefore applied flexibly according to need, for sub-contracted partners who have their own fully established and recognised systems and those that need additional support from us to develop their own framework. In practical terms, this means that we:

- build quality assurance and improvement into contractual arrangements
- provide support material for our programmes and explain our basic requirements for managing and quality assuring these learning programmes
- monitor the quality assurance arrangements of those partners that have existing and established quality assurance arrangements
- monitor and support all partners to ensure that the quality assurance and improvement procedures are being applied consistently across all learning provision

Management Information, Data Analysis, Benchmarking And Target Setting

We use the TERMS Management Information System and our Adult Learning Data Analysis System (ALDAS) to manage and analyse our data electronically. We can carry out in-depth analysis on our learner and sub-contracted partner data enabling us to passively benchmark our performance nationally. We also actively benchmark performance against our own past performance and against our in-depth knowledge of 'what outstanding performance looks like' for individual curriculum areas. This process of turning data into knowledge informs the strategic direction for the service. We analyse our provision at local level and provider level enabling us to manage and steer the curriculum to meet both service, regional and national priorities. Analysis is shared with partners at Quality Support Visits (QSVs), contract monitoring visits and provider events. Analysis is carried out on:



- learners and enrolments
- vocational/subject area of learning enrolments per locality/provider
- intended impact of the provision e.g. employment outcome
- retention rates
- learner gender
- learner age
- learner ethnicity
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) priority areas based on the address of learners
- learner employment status of learners
- learner rurality
- pass rate
- progression
- teaching qualifications of tutors

Quality Support Visits

Each sub-contracted partner has a named officer responsible for managing the individual contract and providing support and development as required. Action Plans are developed for emerging providers to encourage best practice from the start of the contract.

Themed Learning Walks

Walkthrough observations will be focussed on specific areas of provision such as embedded English and maths, PREVENT, subject-specific language, etc. Each month a different area will be observed; this will be shared with sub-partners in advance. The walkthrough observation will only look at implementation of this area to get a broad understanding of how effective it is across all our providers.

The outcome of these observations will feed into sub-contracted partner and tutor feedback and training. If we feel that the observed area is not sufficient we will work with specific sub-contracted partners and arrange training where necessary.

To ensure high quality delivery we have introduced nine areas of teaching and learning that should be embedded into every lesson. During walkthroughs, in addition to a focus area we will note which of these nine elements have been observed. The nine areas we aim to demonstrate are:

- excellent subject knowledge
- pace, planning and purpose
- effective differentiation including stretch and challenge meaning all learners' needs are met
- a stimulating and safe environment
- learners making progress and can explain what progress they have made
- effective assessment which allows tutors to intervene to ensure learners' progress
- a variety of engaging activities
- positive relationships and behaviour for learning
- learners developing cross-curricular, transferable skills and attributes



Learning walks will take place regularly. Tutors should expect a learning walk at least once every two months but more frequently where possible.

Observations Of Quality Of Education

Observations enable us to make judgements regarding the effectiveness of our providers' QA processes by measuring teaching and learning against the Education Inspection Framework. Observations provide an objective overview which can be used to further enhance and disseminate existing good practice and address recurrent areas for development across our sub-contracted partners. The emphasis is on monitoring the quality of education and gaining a perspective of the learners' experience within the class.

When planning our schedule of class visits, we prioritise providers according to the following selection criteria:

- New partner providers
- Small providers who do not have the in-house capacity to carry out many class observations
- Establishing consistency and level of delivery across providers
- New courses
- Courses where learner feedback/complaints give cause for concern
- Courses where retention/achievement levels give cause for concern
- Specific themes that vary year on year e.g. focus on the promotion of maths and English within the curriculum

Moderation Of Observations Of Teaching, Learning And Assessment (OTLAs)

OTLAs will continue to monitor and provide formative feedback for our individual tutors. Tutors will be given two working days' notice of an observation (considering working hours) and will receive a full observation using the observation form. This will include:

- Planning
- Personal development
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment for learning
- Learner feedback
- Safeguarding

Following an OTLA, the tutor will be given written feedback, including smart targets for improvement.

The OTLA framework focuses exclusively on the session being observed and the matters that the tutor has control over. Areas that are based more broadly in the provider will be assessed as a part of sub-contracted partner observations.



Partner Observations

To prepare sub-contracted partners for potential “deep dives”, we have established a Partner Observation. This will be a thorough look at the overall provision the sub-contracted partner provides, across a range of tutors and courses. It will include, but will not be limited to:

- discussion with individual learners
- discussion with individual tutors
- discussion with an individual curriculum team, head of department or workplace supervisor
- discussion with a group of learners (covering induction, assessment, safeguarding, PREVENT, feedback, learning planning, what they need to bring and prepare for, implementation through the lens of the learner)
- joint scrutiny with a tutor/assessor of learner’s progress from starting point (progress tracking records)
- discussion with a group of tutors (covering how assessment is used and how lessons are planned against curriculum)
- joint work scrutiny with a tutor or manager
- case study of learners who have high needs
- visits to learning and work environments
- discussion with a manager on outcomes (impact)
- review of accommodation, resources, or workplace
- discussion with an apprentice
- discussion regarding safeguarding

We hope that these activities will provide an overall picture of the provision being delivered. Sub-contracted partners will be given two weeks’ notice to prepare for a partner observation in order to gather the relevant information needed and arrange appropriate dates for the activities mentioned.

Rather than repeat observations we will conduct a series of OTLAs in advance of the partner observation. These will include conversations with tutors and learners which will feed into the partner observation. This will relieve the pressure on tutors during the observation process.

Work scrutinies will require a sample of learners’ work from a range of courses and will follow the work scrutiny framework that will be provided. We will be looking for evidence that the work is consistent, follows the scheme of work, shows evidence of feedback and response, has sufficient challenge and demonstrates positive attitudes to learning. Supportive guidance and SMART targets will be given based on the scrutiny.

Feedback will be given in line with current Ofsted guidance on quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, and personal development. This will allow us to ensure that our provision is consistently good or outstanding across our whole curriculum.

For quality of education, this means:

- curriculum intent is strong. Providers and tutors have a clear understanding of the intended curriculum and what it means for their practice
- implementation is consistent including for those with SEND and high needs



- there are consistently demanding curriculum goals that match the aims of the curriculum. This should be demonstrated by planning and sequencing which moves learners towards the knowledge and skills for future learning and employment
- learner work is of constantly high standard
- learner achievement is consistently high
- learners are studying the intended curriculum, demonstrated through discussion and work scrutiny
- tutors have excellent subject knowledge
- tutors present information clearly, check understanding effectively, identify misconceptions and provide clear and formative feedback
- work being completed is sufficiently demanding
- subject-specific, technical, or professional vocabulary is embedded in curriculum
- support staff are utilised effectively
- techniques and methodology that embeds long term memory is clear throughout the planning and delivery of the courses
- assessment is used to monitor and guide learning. This can be in terms of subject knowledge, skills, understanding or evaluation
- the learning environment is conducive to effective learning and resources and materials are reflect the ambitions intentions for the courses on offer
- where used, remote learning is well integrated into the programme of study
- learners make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points in each of their courses
- learners are equipped for the next stage of employment

For behaviour and attitudes this means:

- learners are respectful of one another and staff. They play a part in producing a positive learning environment
- learners are resilient and persistent in the face of challenge or difficulty
- learners participate in activities beyond the basic requirements, such as competitions, social action projects etc.
- where learners are not consistently demonstrating these attitudes, the provider has taken steps and adjusted to support them in their progression
- attendance and punctuality are consistently high, including any distance or remote learning activities
- principles of equality, diversity, inclusion, tolerance, and respect are nurtured among all learners and staff. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, and intimidation are rare, and dealt with swiftly and appropriately



For personal development this means:

- personal development is consistently and extensively promoted to all learners. Learners have a wide, rich set of experiences offered that teach the importance of actively contributing to society
- participation in wider activities is high and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are not hindered in their participation
- learners are prepared for further education, employment or training by being provided with unbiased potential next steps, high quality locally relevant careers guidance and opportunities for work experience
- learners are taught how to protect themselves from radicalisation, are taught fundamental British values, appreciate diversity within society, and how to have respect for various protected characteristics as defined in law

Partners can expect observations at most once every 2 years.

Sharing Best Practice

Provider Network events and 'Cluster Group' meetings are held throughout the academic year. All providers are expected to attend. These opportunities encourage the sharing of good practice and development of referral opportunities which will improve progression pathways for learners. These events will also provide scope for specific training needs that arise from feedback from the quality assurance process.

Information, Advice And Careers Education Guidance

The Skills and Employment Service is committed to the development of their staff and sub-contracted partners through effective delivery of information, advice and guidance (IAG). We are continually developing our communication channels to ensure we can promote our services and ensure accessibility of information. We gather and act on feedback about the quality of the service and continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring and action. We are Matrix accredited for our IAG to learners and sub-contracted partners. From promotional material to end of course review, impartial IAG is embedded throughout delivery.

Feedback

One of the most effective ways of judging our performance and informing improvement is to listen to our learners, sub-contracted partners and funders. We have established formal channels of communication to ensure we are able to systematically pick up and act upon feedback we receive.

Sub-contracted partner feedback is obtained through:

- networks, training and development events
- stakeholder consultations
- development officer support visits
- quality support visits





- the annual review process
- tutor feedback gathered via teaching and learning observation process
- the sub-contracted partner self-assessment process
- contributory reviews as part of the S&E self-assessment process

Learner feedback is obtained through:

- end course feedback from all learners
- talking to learners through the teaching and learning observation process
- receiving compliments and complaints both directly and through contractual obligations with partners
- promoting opportunities for feedback including national learner surveys

Monitoring Of Areas For Improvements, Including Safeguarding And Equity Diversity & Inclusion

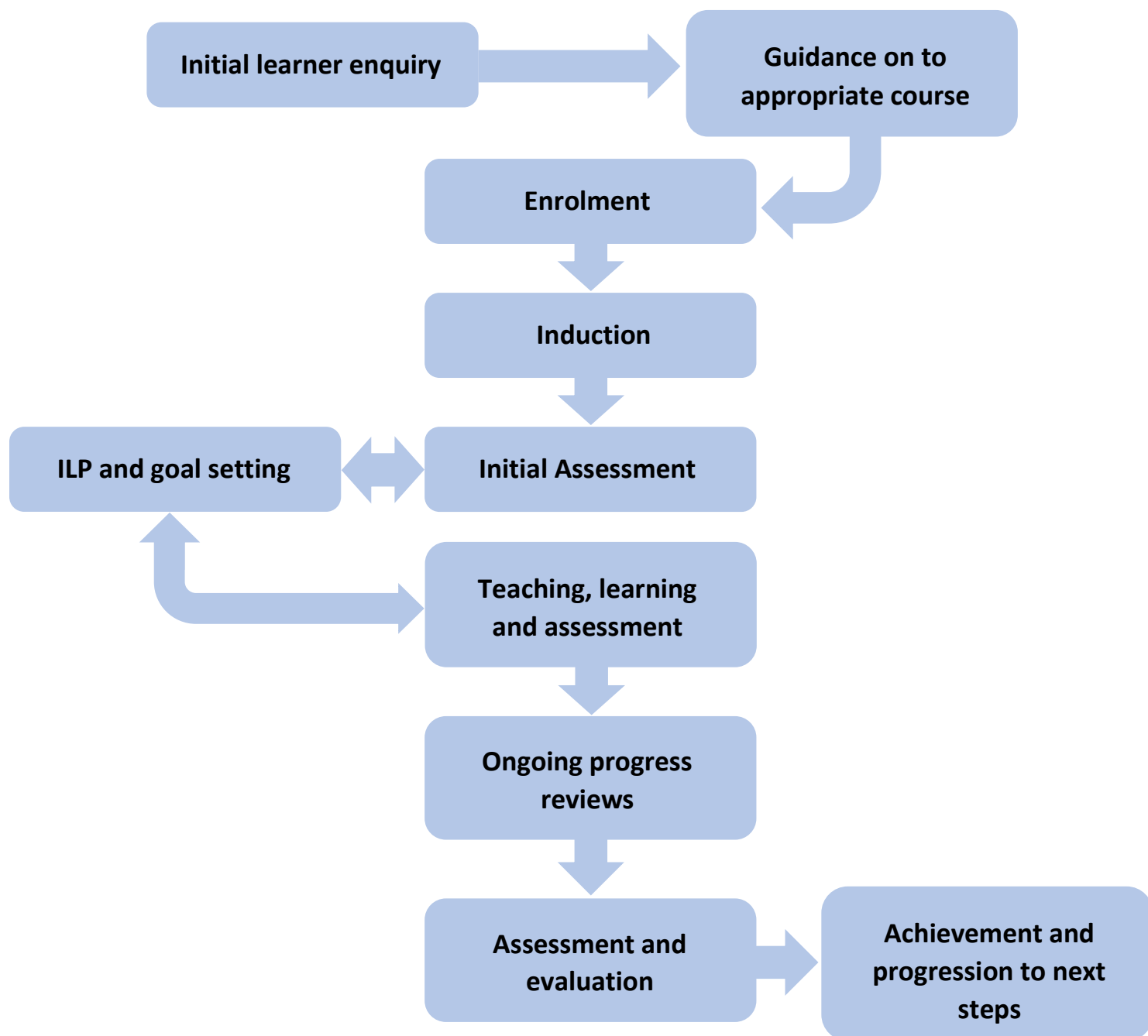
The Quality System (QSYS) tracks compliance against contractual responsibilities including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for tutors and DBS compliance. The system tracks areas for improvement highlighted during observations and ensures these are addressed at support visits. In addition, we sample Risk Assessments to ensure they are of good quality and that observations undertaken reflect the broad range of provision.



The Learning Journey

Each part of the learning journey is covered by planning tools to enhance the quality of information the learner receives, the support given to make the most of their learning experience and the actual teaching and learning experience itself.

LEARNER JOURNEY (Tutor version)





Policies, Procedures, Guidance And Strategies

The Skills and Employment service operates within a set of policies, procedures and strategies published by Cheshire West and Chester Council. In order to embed these ways of working, we have contextualised a series of policies and guidance which ensure that sub-contracted partners are able to adopt the critical elements within their delivery, whilst aligning provision to the council's policies and procedures.

Further information can be found on [our website](#) in the following related documents:

- Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection and Information Security Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Tuition Fee Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Learner Withdrawal Policy
- Achievement in Non-Accredited Learning Policy
- Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy

Copies of the following documents are available on request from the Quality team:

- The Self-Assessment Report (SAR)
- Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Financial And Administration Procedures

All written policies, procedures and strategies are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure we are up to date with current legislation and best practice. All documents are available on [our website](#) or on request.

Self-assessment Process And Development Planning

Each year the local authority publishes a rigorous Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The SAR is based on the annual QA process that is embodied in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). This leads to the production of an informed development strategy for the following year. Self-assessment is based on evidence from:

- data analysis
- sub-contracted partner performance
- sub-contracted partner self-assessment reviews
- sub-contracted partner contributory reviews to our SAR
- teaching and learning observation reports
- learner feedback
- feedback from funding bodies
- quality support visit reports
- national and regional strategy

**Quality Assurance Mark (CW&C provision)**

Sub-contracted partners meeting the requirements of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework will be awarded an annual Quality Assured standard. This approved status means that the local authority is assured of a high quality level of provision.

Adult Education (including some under 19 provision) - Quality Assurance And Improvement Framework

Judgements are made against the following standards/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from evidence produced as part of the contractual process.

Contract Performance	
KPI ref	
1.1	Contract delivered within agreed delivery hours and enrolment targets (including any in year re-profiled targets)
1.2	Efficiency and compliance of contract and finance
1.3	Timeliness of data returns
1.4	Quality of data returns
1.5	Completeness of data
1.6	Communication with the Service, including attendance at meetings/CPD events
1.7	Overall commitment to quality improvement
1.8	Timely response to service requests for information (including SAR return)
1.9	Robust self-assessment processes and action planning for improvement in place



Quality of Education – QIF		
KPI ref	Aspect	
2.5a	a	Tutor has good knowledge of the subject and course
2.6a	b	Tutor presents subject matter clearly promoting appropriate discussion about the subject matter
2.6b	c	Tutor checks learners' understanding systematically, identifies misconceptions and provides clear feedback
2.6c	d	Teacher responds and adapts their teaching as necessary
2.7a	e	Teaching is designed to help learners to remember in the long term the content they have been taught
2.7b	f	Teaching is designed to help learners integrate new knowledge into larger concepts
2.8	g	Assessment is purposeful and necessary to enable learners to embed and use their knowledge, and to inform teaching
2.9a	h	Tutor creates an environment that allows the learner to focus on learning
2.9b	i	Resources reflect the curriculum and are necessary to support the provider's ambitious intentions
2.9c	j	Resources used build knowledge and skills for future learning and employment
2.10	k	At early stages of reading, reading materials are closely matched to learners' phonics knowledge (English courses only)

Behaviour and Attitudes – EIF		
KPI ref	Aspect	
3.1a	a	There is a high expectation for learners' behaviour and conduct and there are applied consistently and fairly
3.1b	b	Learners comply with the high expectations for behaviour and conduct
3.2a	c	Learners' attitudes to their education or training are positive
3.2b	d	Learners are committed to their learning
3.3	e	Learners have high attendance and are punctual
3.4a	f	Relationships between staff and learners are positive and mutually respectful



Personal Development – EIF		
KPI ref	Aspect	
4.1	a	The curriculum extends and provides for learners' wider development including their interests and talents
4.2a	b	The curriculum and wider work support the development of character including resilience, confidence, independence and other personal attributes
4.2b	c	Learners know how to keep physically and mentally healthy
4.3	d	The provider prepares learners for future success in their next steps by providing them with impartial IAG/CEG
4.4a	e	Learners are prepared for life in modern Britain by developing their understanding of PREVENT and British Values
4.4b	f	Learners are supported to understand diversity, and respect for the protected characteristics is promoted

KPI 5 – Leadership and Management – EIF		
KPI ref	Aspect	
5.1		Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training to all
5.2		Leaders focus on improving staff's subject knowledge to enhance teaching and assessment
5.3		Leaders aim to ensure that all learners complete their programme of study (no off-rolling)
5.4		Leaders engage effectively with learners and others in their community, e.g parents, carers, employers and local services
5.5		Leaders are realistic and constructive in the way that they manage staff, including their workload
5.6		Leaders protect their staff from bullying and harassment
5.7		Those responsible for governance understand their role and carry this out effectively. They ensure that the provider has a clear vision and strategy and that resources are managed well. They hold learners to account for the quality of provision
5.8		Those with responsibility for governance ensure the provider fulfils statutory duties e.g. under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties e.g. in relation to Prevent and Safeguarding
5.9		The provider has a culture of, and facilitates, effective safeguarding arrangements.
5.10		Reinforce the expectations that learners sent to subcontracted partners are made aware of direct reporting methods, and provide ongoing training to all tutors over a wide range of safeguarding and wellness subject matter



KPI 6 – Priorities		
KPI ref	Aspect	
6.1	a	Tutor clearly plans to meet individual learner needs, and makes reasonable adjustments
6.2	b	Robust, SMART and challenging goals/targets are negotiated, agreed and monitored enabling learners to make good progress
6.4	c	Effective and consistent formative and summative assessment is in place
6.6	d	English, maths and ICT consistently embedded into the course
6.8	e	Learners receive full induction and know their rights and responsibilities
6.9	f	Tutors ensure that learners develop appropriate work ready skills, and benefit from appropriate work-related learning
6.10	g	On-course learner progress is monitored and used effectively to inform planning for individual needs
6.11	h	Tutor sets demanding targets for skills development

**IQA Stages and Activities**

Timescales are subject to modification dependent on start dates of units and delivery models. Please note that the key functions of internal moderation/verification described below will be carried out by the designated internal verifier (IV) or external verifier (EV) if relevant.

Time	Activities (Peer review/internal moderation/standardisation/verification)
Autumn Term 1 August-October	Induction for new tutors
	Tutors assigned units/modules
	Course spread sheet produced
	Internal moderator/verifier informed.
	Pre course check of assessment completed for all courses
	IQA schedule established and circulated to all stakeholders, including scheduled standardisation/CPD sessions
Autumn Term 2 November-December	Internal verification sampling plan produced
	Courses observed as per sampling plan (through walk throughs, OTLAs and QSVs)
	Autumn 1 IQA moderation and standardisation
	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Peer review process monitored to inform improvements
	Internal verification sampling plan continues
Spring Term 1 January-February	Autumn 2 IQA moderation and standardisation
	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Documentation prepared for EV visit (if relevant)
Spring Term 2 March-April	Peer review process monitored to inform improvements
	Spring term sampling plan actioned (walk throughs, OTLAs and QSVs)
	Spring 1 IQA moderation and standardisation
Summer Term 1 April-May	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Spring 2 IQA moderation and standardisation
	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Peer Review process monitored to inform improvements
Summer Term 2 May-June	Summer term sampling plan actioned (walk throughs, OTLAs and QSVs)
	Summer 1 IQA moderation and standardisation
	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Peer review process monitored to inform improvements
Autumn Term 2 November-December	Prepare documentation for EV visit (if relevant)
	Peer review process monitored to inform improvements



Summer Term 2 June-July	Summer 2 IQA moderation and standardisation
	IV samples assessed work as per sampling plan
	Pre-course checks to be carried out for next academic year provision prior to first delivery
	Peer review process monitored to inform improvements