



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





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.



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 in the [Resources](#) 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](#) - Five Ways to Wellbeing

[Cheshire West Health and Wellbeing](#) – includes links to local health and wellbeing services

[Every Mind Matters](#)

[Kind to your mind](#)

[NHS Choices](#) - informative site covering all aspects of mental health.

[Mind](#) - a mental health charity that can help you make choices about treatment, understand your rights or reach out to sources of support.

[One You](#) - find tips on how to stress less



Course Delivery

There is a wealth of information available on the [Skills and Employment Resources page](#) to help support tutors with their course delivery such as in the areas listed below. Please familiarise yourselves 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.



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 Department for Education.

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 [Department for Education](#).



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 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 Resources page, including an IAG handbook for non-qualified practitioners. For further information on how you can offer this essential service, please contact the Quality Team.



Marketing of Commissioned Courses

As a provider of education, the Skills and Employment Service has high standards in the presentation of our work. Regardless of the subject matter of courses, all marketing must be professional: with simple, clean design and clear, correct English.

The service follows plain English and design accessibility guidelines, details of which can be found in the Marketing and Communications Standards document in our online [Resources](#) area online. If you require any support with marketing please contact the Quality team who will be happy to help.

The Skills and Employment Service has its own distinctive brand which should be used on all marketing materials delivered under contract.

The Quality team provide contractors with templates for course posters and social media posts which **must be used for all provision under Cheshire West and Chester Council contract**.

Providers can edit the content of templates but must take care to ensure that the basic design is not altered, for example by resizing text boxes, changing background colours or moving logos.

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 Chester Skills 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
Government public services	www.direct.gov.uk
Learning and work Institute	learningandwork.org.uk
Careers advice for adults	nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/

**Useful Contacts**

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
Helen Crampton	Business Information Officer	Marketing and communications	helen.crampton@cheshirewestandchester.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