

# Social Services (Children and Young People) Apprenticeships

A report on the external review by Education Scotland of training in Social Services (Children and Young People) Modern Apprenticeships

1 November 2019

# Contents

Context .....	1
Grades .....	2
Outcomes and impact .....	4
Delivery of training .....	8
Leadership and quality culture .....	13
Capacity to improve .....	15
Recommendations .....	16
Appendix 1 – External review methodology .....	17
Appendix 2 – Grade exemplification .....	18
Appendix 3 – Abbreviations .....	19

# Context

Education Scotland has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake external reviews of the off-the-job and on-the-job training elements of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes, within each of the industry sectors. The strategic vision outlined by the Scottish Government in Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy<sup>1</sup> (YES) is for a post-16 education and training sector in which:

- all provision, regardless of provider, is focused on providing young people with the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to support Scotland's economic growth and maximise their life chances;
- all providers and their key stakeholders work together regionally and nationally to ensure high quality provision that meets the needs of learners and employers; and
- the relevance and quality of this provision, the extent to which it supports economic growth and post-16 reform, and the outcomes learners achieve are evaluated through an appropriate blend of self-evaluation, external scrutiny and public reporting through a national quality assurance and quality improvement system.

The Social Services sector has an important role in the provision of child care in Scotland. In October 2017, the Scottish Government launched a campaign to substantially expand the early learning and childcare workforce, to support the increase in funded childcare from 600 hours to 1,140 hours for each child per year, by 2020. This expansion created the need for a dedicated, skilled and well-qualified workforce that would ensure a high-quality experience for all children across Scotland.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is responsible for raising standards in Scotland's social services workforce, and further information on the role of the SSSC can be found at <https://www.sssc.uk.com/>. The SSSC [Workforce Skills Report 2016–2017](#) identified that between 2013 and 2015 the number of children registered with early learning and childcare services increased by 3.5%. With 249,400 children registered with early learning and childcare services in Scotland, including day care of children and childminding services, employers had concerns about recruiting and retaining workers to meet the increasing demand.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) record the levels of enrolments and achievement for apprentices. In March 2019, there were over 2,500 apprentices in the early years and childcare sector on MA programmes across Scotland, and the number of apprentices starting their training in this sector has increased by almost 50% in the last three years. The MA Social Services (Children and Young People) MA is relevant to a number of different groups within the workforce. This review focuses on apprentices within the early years and childcare sector.

The SSSC register was set up under the [Regulation of Care \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) to regulate social service workers, and to promote their education and training. The register of social service workers helps to protect service users, and most MA Social Services (Children and Young People) programmes are designed to ensure apprentices are eligible to register with the SSSC at practitioner level on completion of their training.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/News/Releases/2012/01/Employment>  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7750>

# Grades

The overall grades for each of the questions from the quality indicators, summarised from the providers visited, are shown below:

Outcomes and impact		Service delivery		Leadership and quality culture
How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	How good is our delivery of training?	How good is our management of training delivery?	How good is our strategic leadership?
<b>very good</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>good</b>

A grade of very good describes an evaluation of training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement in this evaluation, and any that do exist, do not significantly diminish apprentices’ experiences. While an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of training, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide training without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the contracted provider will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

A grade of good describes an evaluation of training characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of training in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of apprentices’ experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the contracted provider should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

A grade of satisfactory describes training which is characterised by strengths just outweighing areas for development. Apprentices have access to a basic level of provision and represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices’ experiences. However, while the areas for development will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices’ experiences. It implies that the centre should take action to address areas for further development while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of weak applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important areas for development. In general, while there may be some strengths, the important areas for development will be sufficient to diminish apprentices’ experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the centre.

The table below shows the distribution of the grades for each quality indicator, across the 12 providers that Education Scotland visited for this report. The providers are: Aberlour Trust, Azilo Training Ltd, Borders College, Carousel Training Centre, City of Glasgow College, Dumfries and Galloway College, I&g learning (Scotland) Ltd, Lorndale Aberdeen Ltd, Midlothian Council, North Ayrshire Council, Qualitas International Ltd, and Treasure Island Nursery Ltd.

### Distribution of grades across the sample of individual providers

	How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders ?	How good is our delivery of training?	How good is our management of training delivery?	How good is our strategic leadership?
Provider	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	very good
Provider	very good	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent
Provider	very good	very good	very good	excellent	very good
Provider	very good	very good	very good	very good	very good
Provider	very good	very good	very good	very good	very good
Provider	very good	very good	very good	very good	very good
Provider	very good	very good	very good	very good	good
Provider	good	good	very good	very good	good
Provider	good	good	satisfactory	good	good
Provider	satisfactory	good	very good	very good	satisfactory
Provider	satisfactory	good	very good	good	satisfactory
Provider	weak	satisfactory	weak	satisfactory	weak
<b>Overall</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>good</b>

# Outcomes and impact

## How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high-quality outcomes?

**Grade:** very good

## How effective are training providers at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?

### Areas of positive practice

- Most providers deliver and maintain high rates of apprentice achievement, which are above the sector performance level of 73.1%. A few Independent Training Providers (ITP) deliver achievement rates which are significantly higher than the SDS national performance level of 78%. For example, the achievement rate at one provider has been consistently high over the last three years, and was 18% above national performance levels in January 2019.
- All providers are responding well to the Scottish Government's expansion of funded childcare places by recruiting the contracted number of apprentices agreed with SDS. Almost half of these providers have accepted additional apprentice places and have successfully recruited to their increased allocation levels.
- Almost all apprentices are making good progress with their individual goals and are on target to achieve their MA award at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7.
- Almost all apprentices who complete their MA programme gain employment in the early learning and childcare sector.
- Some providers hold an annual graduation ceremony to celebrate the achievement of their apprentices. These events provide the opportunity to formally congratulate apprentices on their success and help motivate them to succeed in further training and employment opportunities.

### Areas for development

- A few providers deliver achievement rates which are below the sector average and the SDS national performances level.
- In almost all providers, the proportion of apprentices recruited from SDS equality and diversity priority groups is low.

## Practice worthy of dissemination

### Carousel Training and the Annual Graduation Ceremony

Each year, Carousel Training recognise the success of their Modern Apprentices by hosting a graduation ceremony. This is a welcome opportunity to recognise formally the apprentices' hard work, to congratulate them on their success at becoming qualified early learning and childcare practitioners, and to wish them luck as they progress onwards in their chosen careers.

The annual graduation ceremony also affords the chance for apprentices to celebrate the completion of their apprenticeship with friends and family. It is an occasion during which they can spend a little time reflecting on their experiences and planning their next steps with confidence..

The graduation event is held in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall with more than 200 Modern Apprentices in attendance, together with guest speakers from SDS and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Employers are also invited to engage in these celebrations, as they have provided stimulating environments in which the learning and development of each Modern Apprentice has flourished.

Carousel Training recognise that completing an apprenticeship can be a time of mixed emotions. Pride at what has been achieved formally, happiness at all that has been accomplished and a little anxiety about what lies ahead. Carousel Training encourages Modern Apprentices to interpret the graduation ceremony not as an end, but as a beginning. It is a day of celebration of success which also inspires apprentices still undergoing the programme to do well and achieve their qualifications.

## How well do providers adhere to statutory principles and guidance?

### Areas of positive practice

- All providers have effective quality assurance arrangements and internal verification procedures in place to meet, and often exceed, awarding body requirements. These arrangements are supported by operational policies and procedures relevant to the legislation and regulations of the early years and childcare sector, and are reviewed regularly.
- Almost all providers actively promote apprenticeships in early years and childcare to under-represented groups. A key focus is the promotion of career opportunities to address gender imbalance. Activities include the use of social media, promotional videos and literature, and attendance at school careers events. A few providers engage with organisations such as Men in Childcare and work effectively with third-party organisations such as Black and Ethnic Minorities in Scotland (BEMIS), Dundee Women's International Centre and mental health charities to help improve apprentice recruitment from SDS priority equality groups.
- All training staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in their roles. In many providers, staff are registered practitioners with the SSSC, maintaining their career-long professional learning (CLPL) in line with the requirements for this regulatory organisation.
- All providers have effective arrangements in place to ensure apprentices understand fully their role in relation to safeguarding and health and safety. These arrangements are supported by comprehensive policies and procedures, which are explained clearly at induction and reinforced regularly during progress reviews with apprentices.
- Almost all providers carry out initial assessment of apprentices' additional support needs (ASN). Where needs are identified, appropriate arrangements are made that support apprentices well during their training.

- All providers hold regular team meetings to ensure assessors and managers understand the requirements for standardisation, provide consistent standards of delivery and share best practice with their colleagues.

### Area for development

- Strategies to increase the number of male apprentices in particular, and the proportion of apprentices from other SDS priority equality groups are not yet fully effective.

#### **I&g learning (Scotland) Ltd and the commitment to supporting apprentices with additional support needs.**

Working in partnership with employers and supported by SDS funding, I&g learning support candidates with barriers to learning, including mental health issues and learning disabilities such as autism, dyslexia and dyscalculia. I&g learning also organise staff development training sessions for both I&g assessors and staff at the candidates' work place. This approach has been used effectively to support a young MA candidate with autism and dyslexia to achieve their qualification aim and to remain in employment. Managers from I&g learning also support employers to apply for Access to Work funding which provides appropriate resources to support employees.

The SDS MA Ethnic Intersectionality Incentive Pilot funding, provides £500 to support disadvantage learners. Intersectionality is the term for the cumulative disadvantage experienced by individuals where discrimination may occur on the basis of more than one ground. I&g learning accessed this funding to support two MA candidates including:

- a refugee candidate aged 18, living initially in homeless accommodation. The funding was used to enable her to attend training sessions, provide intensive one-to-one mentoring and guidance services and support her through various crises she experienced; and,
- an older woman working in the early years sector. English was her second language, she had no prior qualifications and supported two disabled children at home. It was agreed that the best use of this funding would be to purchase a laptop and software and provide training to use the laptop for study and to improve her communication skills.



## How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?

**Grade:**        **good**

## How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?

### Areas of positive practice

- Most providers offer MA programmes for early years and childcare that are accessible and flexible to meet the needs of local and regional employers. These programmes provide apprentices with relevant opportunities to develop knowledge and skills which align well with their job roles and responsibilities.
- Almost all apprentices engage purposefully in helpful induction activities which prepare them effectively for their MA programme. In a few ITPs, apprentices complete a learning style questionnaire during induction which is particularly valuable in helping them to understand how to approach their learning as they progress through their training.
- Some providers offer opportunities for apprentices to attend additional training activities relevant to their employment sector. These professional updates help to raise apprentices' awareness of national policies that impact on their job roles, supporting their wider CLPL and employability skills.
- Most assessors work well with employers to tailor on-the-job training to the work roles of apprentices. They discuss the range of optional units available with apprentices, often including employers, to agree the best match for apprentices' individual interests and longer-term career aspirations.
- Most assessors meet with their apprentices every two to three weeks, in addition to delivering formal progress reviews. They ensure that apprentices have a clear understanding of their progress and set goals for their next steps.
- Almost all apprentices are making good progress in the achievement of their core and essential skills. Most of the training for these skills is contextualised to their job role and this prepares them well for employment and further learning.
- Most employers value the combination of work-based learning and underpinning knowledge developed by their apprentices. These employers are satisfied with the quality and content of the MA programme, which prepares apprentices well for their career in early years and childcare.

### Areas for development

- In some providers, opportunities are missed during the early stages of the MA programme for apprentices to identify and gather relevant portfolio evidence
- Not all assessors actively and explicitly involve employers and apprentices in the selection of optional units, or the development of apprentice training plans.
- In some providers, arrangements to systematically seek and analyse apprentice feedback on the services delivered are underdeveloped. This limits opportunities to respond to the needs of potential and current apprentices, or to inform improvement strategies.

# Delivery of training

## How good is our delivery of training?

**Grade:** very good

## How well does the design and delivery of training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?

### Areas of positive practice

- Almost all providers deliver MA programmes that align well with the needs of employers and are highly relevant to the job roles of apprentices.
- In the best providers, additional study sessions are offered for apprentices to support achievement of their qualification and provide supplementary training. For example, at Borders College, assessors provide flexible support for apprentices as additional one-to-one training sessions in a variety of good quality, convenient locations.
- Overall, assessors develop clear training goals with apprentices in conjunction their employers, who often have a role in monitoring the achievement of objectives.
- Most apprentices have a clear understanding of their training plan and use these plans well to consider how they will achieve learning outcomes in their job role. Apprentices appreciate the opportunities to establish these goals and personalise their training plans.
- Almost all providers deliver core skills that are contextualised to the working practices of apprentices. For example, Aberlour Futures have designed an assessment for the information and communications technology (ICT) core skill around a PowerPoint presentation, for which apprentices research a 'snack time' activity that is a legislative requirement in their workplace.
- Some providers have developed 'mentor' or 'buddy' arrangements to provide independent support for apprentices within the workplace. These arrangements are structured and highly effective. Mentors, or buddies, are previous apprentices who have become experienced practitioners. In the best ITPs they are supported with dedicated training and comprehensive handbooks that detail their roles and responsibilities.
- Almost all apprentices engage purposefully in their training and most are making good progress in achieving their assessed units for the MA programme. Almost all apprentices value the positive and supportive relationships they have with their assessor, which prepares them well for assessments and helps to maintain their confidence and motivation.
- Almost all providers have effective arrangements in place to track and report on the progress of apprentices. Most assessors provide flexibility with the timescales for assessment. They provide extra support for apprentices who are less confident, or find challenges with their progress, and fast-track those apprentices who are able to achieve more quickly.
- Almost all providers have appropriate arrangements in place to support the additional needs of individual apprentices and specific groups, which help them to progress and achieve positive outcomes. These include links with external agencies for dyslexia screening, autism and mental health, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), provision of additional support materials and paper-based portfolios.

### Area for development

- Some apprentices have insufficient time within their on-the-job training to complete assessments and update their portfolios.

## Practice worthy of dissemination

### Aberlour Futures and Saturday study sessions

Saturday study sessions are offered to all apprentices every six weeks. The content of these sessions is flexible, according to the needs of apprentices who record informal and certificated learning for CLPL in their Learning Activity Plan. Almost all apprentices make good use of these study periods to support completion of their award and undertake supplementary training such as reflective writing, safeguarding, first aid, food hygiene and child protection. Apprentices and employers find the study sessions to be highly beneficial for improving knowledge and understanding, creating a positive impact on the work practices of apprentices.

### Borders College and weekly group tutorial sessions

At Borders College, early learning and childcare apprentices are offered scheduled group tutorial sessions each week in convenient locations. The weekly tutorials allow apprentices to have regular contact with their assessor in a relaxed, external environment and provide them with additional opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. The tutorial sessions started in response to employer feedback which highlighted the need for routine meetings away from the distraction of the workplace. Time for tutorials is protected and does not interfere with the responsibilities of apprentices in their job role. Each tutorial session is provided in a locality close to the apprentices' place of work and allows them to focus on key aspects of their award. They facilitate group discussions and allow opportunities to network further and share good practice. Assessors also take the opportunity to deliver core training and professional updating whilst encouraging apprentices to access additional resources.

## How well is training delivered?

### Areas of positive practice

- Almost all assessors plan and deliver training and assessment activities for apprentices well. Assessors work flexibly around the work patterns and job roles of apprentices, and employers value this responsiveness to their business needs.
- Most assessors plan a good range of assessment methods, setting a level of pace and challenge which is appropriate for each individual apprentice.
- Almost all assessors use their professional knowledge and experience effectively when undertaking the assessment of apprentices and encourage them to reflect on their training activities.
- Most assessors use a good range of effective questioning techniques and actively support apprentices to develop a holistic approach to generating evidence for their portfolio. A few ITPs support apprentices particularly well, using learning styles questionnaires and reflective accounts that enhance their learning experience, accommodate their individual needs and help to maintain their motivation.
- Most assessors actively encourage apprentices to access additional learning materials, which support their knowledge and understanding. These include paper-based and on-line resources, such as the SSSC Learning Zone. Apprentices value the availability of these dedicated resources which help to build their independence and confidence when developing vocational and core skills.
- Most assessors provide high-quality, supportive and constructive feedback to apprentices. This feedback is used effectively to inform apprentices about their progress and suggest opportunities for developing their skills further.

- Staff in almost all providers have high-quality and purposeful relationships with employers and apprentices. These positive relationships support apprentices well to make good progress with their training and help to facilitate prompt resolutions when any issues arise
- Almost all apprentices are satisfied with the delivery of their MA programme and the support they receive. They are enthusiastic about their training and are progressing well with their individual training pathway.
- Most employers are satisfied with the MA programme and report that there are good links between the training provided and their needs. They receive good communication and regular reports on the progress of their apprentices from providers.

### Areas for development

- Some apprentices do not have a clear understanding of the importance and relevance of core skills within their MA programme.
- Some assessment activities are overly assessor-led, with missed opportunities to extend deeper learning. Apprentices would benefit from more active involvement in populating their own planning sheets and taking responsibility for managing their own learning.

### Practice worthy of dissemination

#### **Aberlour Futures and supporting apprentices to achieve through personalised training**

Apprentices engage in a Readiness for Assessment activity, prior to starting their MA programme. This is very effective in identifying their most appropriate learning pathway based on an appraisal of individual strengths and weaknesses. Apprentices produce a personal statement that includes the reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship, Where it is identified that they are not yet ready for the MA programme, they are offered top-up learning in consultation with their employer, which may include additional activities in the workplace. Apprentices then participate in a comprehensive induction process that includes helpful group activities, core skills diagnostics, advice on understanding their Learning Activity Record, the requirements of the MA programme, information relating to the SSSC registration requirements, funding for their training, role modelling and good practice. Induction also includes a Learning Styles Questionnaire to help apprentices understand their learning style preferences and select a learning experience that suits their individual needs. During their programme apprentices are encouraged to attend Saturday study sessions, undertake supplementary on-line training and update their Learning Activity Record regularly with formal and informal learning, such as television programmes and other relevant experiences. Apprentices are also given guidance and support for reflective writing that also enhances their MA experience and study skills.

### How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?

#### Areas of positive practice

- All training staff engage well with formal and informal opportunities within established quality assurance arrangements, to evaluate the delivery of MA programmes. Regular meetings allow discussion and reflection on how assessors might enhance their practice for the improvement of training provision. For example, Midlothian Council invite a broad range of stakeholders to discuss the design and delivery of the MA programme, to ensure it meets the needs of apprentices and employers.
- Almost all assessors participate routinely in CLPL activities, discuss emerging priorities in the early years and childcare sector, and maintain up-to-date sector knowledge. They use their expertise well to share effective practice across teams to support improvements to the MA

programme. For example, at Qualitas International Ltd staff attend early learning and childcare conferences, and participate in CLPL opportunities arranged by employers for their staff, which help them to reflect on improvements to the MA programme.

- Almost all providers actively gather informal feedback from employers and apprentices to inform enhancements to the MA programme. Overall, staff respond quickly to any issues raised and examples of improvements made include changes to induction arrangements, assessment methods, individual support arrangements and the introduction of a class representative system.
- In some providers, assessors make effective use of social media as a means of seeking and sharing questions and effective practice. These technology-based solutions are particularly useful in overcoming communication across geographically dispersed teams.

### **Area for development**

- Most college staff do not routinely disaggregate performance data to reflect on the improvement and enhancement of services for apprentices.

## How good is our management of training delivery?

Grade: very good

## How well does the contracted provider work with partners to improve outcomes for apprentices?

### Areas of positive practice

- Almost all providers collaborate well with external stakeholders and partner organisations to improve outcomes for apprentices. There are a wide range of good partnership arrangements in place, shaped by the individual context and scope of each provider. These collaborative links range from Community Planning Partnerships and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) regional groups for the larger providers, through to representation on community groups and employer forums for smaller providers.
- Almost all providers work productively with local schools to promote career opportunities in the early years and childcare sector. Staff from providers attend career events regularly to raise awareness of vocational pathways in the sector, with a strong focus on increasing the proportion of apprentices from under-represented groups.
- All providers are responding proactively to the national priorities for DYW, and in particular, to the Scottish Government priority to expand the early learning and childcare sector workforce by 2020.
- Most providers work well with employers to develop delivery models which provide relevant apprenticeship training closely aligned with key government drivers and employer needs.
- All providers work productively with SDS to improve outcomes for apprentices in the early years and childcare sector. Relationships are effective and providers are responsive to deadlines and the information requests from SDS.
- Some providers offer professional updating for early learning and childcare practitioners employed by other key partners. Apprentices have the opportunity to attend these core training sessions, to develop their skills and knowledge further, adding value for their employers.

### Area for development

- In a few providers, partnership working aimed at increasing the number of apprentices from SDS equality and diversity priority groups is underdeveloped.

# Leadership and quality culture

## How good is our strategic leadership?

Grade: **good**

## How appropriate and influential are the contracted provider's vision, values and aims?

### Areas of positive practice

- Almost all providers have developed a clear vision that responds well to national policy drivers and the expansion in apprenticeship places for the early years and childcare sector. The strategic aims of providers acknowledge the value of delivering a high-quality training experience which develops the knowledge and experience of apprentices.
- Almost all MA programmes take good account of the needs of employers in the early years and childcare sector. They are highly relevant to ensuring apprentices are work-ready and qualified to progress into employment.
- Most providers have well-established links with local, regional or national employers. Managers and staff work closely with these employers and the SSSC to understand the needs of the sector and ensure apprentices are developing skills for employment.
- Almost all managers work closely with training staff and have a clear focus on supporting apprentices effectively to make good progress towards achieving their training goals and career aspirations.
- Almost all provider staff are highly motivated, enthusiastic and engage well with the aims of delivering a high-quality training experience for apprentices and employers.

### Areas for development

- In a few providers, strategies for engagement with schools to promote Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) are underdeveloped.
- In some providers, performance information is not shared routinely with staff to engage them fully in the strategic direction and overall performance of the organisation.

## How effective is leadership for partnership working and delivery of training?

### Areas of positive practice

- In most providers, staff are led well and understand clearly the vision, strategies and direction of the organisation. Communication with staff is regular and coherent. This ensures staff appreciate their role in achieving the best possible training experience for apprentices, and delivering MA programmes which are relevant to the needs of employers.
- Overall, team leadership is effective and staff feel supported well in their roles. Most staff are highly motivated and work effectively in their teams to ensure the successful delivery of apprenticeship programmes.
- Most providers maintain positive relationships with employers and external partners to reflect on the quality of apprenticeship training. This provides opportunities to improve the design of the MA programme in line with the needs of apprentices, employers and the sector.
- Most leaders ensure their staff have a clear understanding of the vision, aims and emerging priorities for the organisation. Most staff are informed well on key performance information and recruitment targets, which helps to embed a culture of improvement at all levels which supports apprentices to achieve their MA award.

- Most providers monitor closely their performance data and track apprentice progress regularly. They take good account of the views of staff, apprentices and employers to inform CLPL opportunities and implement strategies to continuously improve the delivery of programmes and services.

### **Area for development**

- In some providers, partners and stakeholders are not involved sufficiently well in the planning and delivery of MA programmes, and the support arrangements for new apprentices.

## **How well do leaders secure improvements in the quality and impact of training?**

### **Areas of positive practice**

- In most providers, apprentices have the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of their MA programme through informal conversations, such as meetings with their assessor, and in a few providers, through a survey of their experiences.
- There is a culture of quality enhancement in almost all providers. Most staff analyse the reasons for apprentices leaving their programme early, or not completing their MA programme successfully, and implement improvement actions timeously.
- Most providers have robust self-evaluation processes and a strong commitment to continually improving the quality of training and the outcomes for apprentices.
- In the best providers, managers actively encourage staff to share effective practice and reflect on improvements to the delivery of apprenticeship training.

### **Areas for development**

- Some providers do not systematically gather feedback from staff, apprentices and employers to ensure improvements are made to apprenticeship programmes.
- In most providers, arrangements for involving staff in the identification of clear targets for improvement are underdeveloped.
- In the majority of providers, equalities data is not used effectively to inform actions to increase the proportion of apprentices from under-represented groups.



# Capacity to improve

## How good is our capacity to improve?

- Most providers deliver and maintain high rates of apprentice achievement which are above the sector performance level, and a few ITPs have delivered achievement rates which are significantly higher than the SDS national performance level. However, in almost all providers, the proportion of apprentices recruited from SDS equality and diversity priority groups is low.
- Most providers offer MA programmes for early years and childcare that are accessible and flexible to meet the needs of local and regional employers. These programmes provide apprentices with relevant opportunities to develop knowledge and skills which align well with their job roles and responsibilities. However, in some providers assessors do not actively and explicitly involve employers and apprentices in the selection of optional units, or the development of training plans.
- Almost all apprentices engage purposefully in their training and most are making good progress in achieving their training goals. Almost all apprentices value the positive and supportive relationships they have with their assessor, which prepares them well for assessments and helps to maintain their confidence and motivation. Assessors work flexibly around the work patterns and job roles of apprentices, and employers value this responsiveness to their business needs. However, some assessment activities are overly assessor-led, with missed opportunities to extend deeper learning.
- Almost all providers have developed a clear vision that responds well to the national priorities for DYW, and in particular, to the Scottish Government priority to expand the early learning and childcare sector workforce by 2020. Almost all providers collaborate well with external stakeholders and partner organisations to improve outcomes for apprentices, working productively with local schools to promote career opportunities in the early years and childcare sector.
- Overall, team leadership is effective and staff feel supported well in their roles. Most staff are highly motivated and work productively in their teams to ensure the successful delivery of apprenticeship programmes. Most managers and staff analyse the reasons for apprentices leaving their programme early, or not completing their MA programme successfully, and implement improvement actions timeously.
- In almost all ITPs, there are robust self-evaluation processes and a strong commitment to continually improving the quality of training and the outcomes for apprentices. However, in the colleges visited, arrangements to systematically seek and analyse apprentice feedback on the services delivered are underdeveloped, limiting opportunities to respond to the needs of potential and current apprentices, or inform improvement strategies.

# Recommendations

## Providers should:

- work with Education Scotland and SDS to share and develop practices from those centres with excellent grades;
- continue to improve the achievement rates for early learning and childcare apprenticeships;
- develop more effective strategies to increase the number of male candidates and the proportion of apprentices from SDS priority groups;
- improve engagement with employers to ensure they are involved fully in discussions regarding unit choice, programme design and the progress of apprentices;
- enhance partnership arrangements with employers and stakeholders to help inform improvement strategies for MA programmes;
- work with employers to consider providing protected time for apprentices to attend study sessions and tutorials that will allow them to complete their assessments and update their portfolios;
- systematically gather feedback from staff, apprentices and employers to inform the planning of improvements for apprenticeship programmes; and,
- in colleges, improve the arrangements for self-evaluation and continuous improvement of their MA programmes.

## Education Scotland should:

- monitor and review the quality of early learning and childcare apprenticeships in all of Scotland's colleges through ongoing and regular engagement and review activities, to improve achievement rates and the training experience for apprentices;
- work with colleges, schools and local authorities to meet the ambitions for apprenticeships from the Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy; and,
- work with colleges and other post-16 providers to identify and respond to changing employer needs within the early learning and childcare sector.

## SDS should:

- work with providers to support employers, awarding bodies and other stakeholders and help them respond effectively to the changing needs within the early learning and childcare sector;
- continue to support providers, local authorities and schools to implement DYW strategies fully, including initiatives on the range and level of apprenticeships;
- continue to support providers to improve the proportion of apprentices from SDS priority groups and,
- support providers to share and develop excellent practice.

## Appendix 1 – External review methodology

Education Scotland's external review of the on-and off-the-job training element of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) builds upon and complements SDS current quality assurance arrangements. These arrangements require all non-college training providers to demonstrate they are meeting SDS quality standards as set out in the SDS Quality Assurance Framework. SDS takes assurance of MA programme delivery from Education Scotland's external review of colleges, which focus on the contribution made by training providers and the quality of the training they deliver.

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland and Associate Assessors (AA), from SDS, colleges and ITPs conduct external reviews. Associate Assessor input ensures that each review team has the expert knowledge and industry-related experience to ensure a full and well-informed review process. The review team evaluated the work undertaken by a sample of colleges and ITPs, referred to collectively as 'providers' in this report.

External review approaches incorporate:

- observation of training activities;
- discussions held with centre managers and staff; and
- discussions held with employers and apprentices.

Upon conclusion of the external review, a written report is provided to each centre by Education Scotland. This includes the grades awarded for each of the five high-level questions posed during the review. This report is shared with SDS but is not published externally, although providers may choose to share their individual reports after the main report is published. The findings from each of the visits are brought together to generate a national report, which is published by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. National reports are designed to inform Ministers about the quality of the off-the-job training element within specific MA programmes. The report will also assist providers in preparing and implementing their quality improvement and enhancement agendas, and include examples of excellent practice where identified.

## Appendix 2 – Grade exemplification

The grades which will be awarded to each of the elements are:

- excellent - outstanding and sector leading
- very good - major strengths
- good - important strengths with some areas for improvement
- satisfactory - strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak - important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory - major weaknesses

### Grade illustrations

- An evaluation of excellent applies to provision in which apprentices' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
- An evaluation of very good applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for development and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the centre will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of good applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for development. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact on apprentices. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which development is required. It implies that the centre should seek to improve further the areas of important strengths, but take action to address the areas for development.
- An evaluation of satisfactory applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh areas for development. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that apprentices have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the areas for development will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the centre should take action to address areas for further development while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of weak applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important areas for development. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important areas for development will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish apprentices' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the centre. Where a grading of weak is given, it will lead to follow-up activity from SDS compliance managers.
- An evaluation of unsatisfactory applies when there are major areas for development in provision requiring immediate remedial action. Apprentices' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the centre. Where a grading of weak is given, it will lead to a follow-up review by staff from SDS and Education Scotland within a year.

## Appendix 3 – Abbreviations

ASN	additional support needs
AA	Associate Assessor
BEMIS	Black and Ethnic Minorities in Scotland
CLPL	career long professional learning
DYW	Developing the Young Workforce
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FA	Foundation Apprenticeship
HMI	HM Inspector
ICT	information and communication technology
ITP	Independent Training Provider
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
SCQF	Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
YES	Youth Employment Strategy

## **Education Scotland**

Denholm House  
Almondvale Business Park  
Almondvale Way  
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330  
E [enquiries@education.scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@education.scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.education.gov.scot](http://www.education.gov.scot)

© Crown Copyright, 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.