



# SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

March 2022

## Contents

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION.....	2
SECTION 2: OVERALL GRADES.....	8
SECTION 3: QUALITY OF EDUCATION.....	10
SECTION 4: BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES.....	15
SECTION 5: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	17
SECTION 6: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT.....	20
SECTION 7: DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEWS .....	25

# SECTION 1:

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION

### VISION, MISSION & VALUES

'Alliance Learning will continuously provide a high standard of delivery in teaching and learning to our learners and customers, with a strong focus on vocational, individual, and social value. Delivery will be inclusive, innovative, and inspiring to ensure they reach their full potential and provide a quality return on investment for employers.'

Alliance Learning's Mission Statement to help achieve this vision is '**Success through Learning**'.

#### Alliance Learning Company Values:

A - Ambition

L - Listen

L - Love your job

I - Integrity & honesty

A - Attitude

N - Never give up

C - Change

E - Equality, inclusion & fairness

### OUR PHILOSOPHY

Alliance Learning has adopted a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) approach to teaching and learning. The aim is to create a growth culture that values learning, education and development. This will be a culture where learners are willing to develop their skills and talents through perseverance and effort and tend to be receptive to training and constructive feedback. They will generally have self-belief that they can improve and be inclined to try new learning methods. This includes the development of the right behaviours,

attitudes and attributes enabling learners to thrive at work and in their training; and to achieve, progress and fulfil their career aspirations.

The quality of the learning experience and how Alliance Learning can continually improve is based on judgements that are reached about the quality of education in its entirety. This will include quality assurance of all pedagogical approaches as well as intent, implementation, and impact of all our programmes.

### **ALLIANCE LEARNING**

- 1.1 Alliance Learning holds a contract with the Education & Skills Funding Agency for Apprenticeships provision. Programmes delivered include Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships in Business Administration and Management, Customer Service, Childcare, and Engineering.
- 1.2 Alliance Learning offers Higher Apprenticeships in Engineering and Business and Professional Administration and Business Management.
- 1.3 Alliance Learning has 334 apprentices enrolled onto an apprenticeship across all programmes.

### **THE BOLTON BOUROUGH: KEY STATISTICS**

- 1.4 Bolton has a population of 288,200. 21% of the population consider themselves to be part of one of the non-white ethnic minorities with those from an Indian background constituting the largest minority group. Bolton includes some of the most affluent areas in the region and some of the poorest. Using 2019 LSOA population estimates, 25% of the Bolton population live in an area that is among the 10% most deprived nationally, while 56% of the population live in an area that is among the 30% most deprived nationally.
- 1.5 In Bolton, the percentage of those unemployed is 5.8%, which remains higher than the North West (4.9%) and national (5.0%) figures. Bolton now has an economically active

working age population which is 8% less than the North West and 9% below the national figure. This gap has widened by 4% since the previous year and where the volume of 'students' made up significant portion of the economically inactive, that is now more in line with regional and national statistics.

1.6 The main contributory factor to the higher rates of economic activity are now from those 'looking after family/home' , which is 3% above North West and 2% above the national rate. 10.1% of people in Bolton, aged 16 to 64, are without any formal qualifications compared to 7.6% NW and 6.4% nationally. Therefore, there is a clear need to upskill residents to gain higher level qualifications and enable them to gain and sustain skilled employment and higher rates of pay.

1.7 The percentage of Bolton residents with level 4 or above is now 10% less than the national rate and 5% less than the NW. 5.6% of 16 and 17 year olds in Bolton are described as NEET or activity not known. This is a slight reduction on the previous year and places Bolton 4th highest in GM. Many of our learners face multiple barriers to their learning and Alliance Learning is successful in supporting them to achieve their learning aims.

*(Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics, Jan 22), (Bolton, JSNA, Jan 22)*

### **COVID-19**

1.8 Alliance Learning recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic has had, and may continue to have an impact on the learning, development and the progress of the apprentices. At the beginning of the pandemic, Leaders and Managers successfully managed the transition of face-to-face curriculum delivery to online learning. Effective risk management of the training centre allowed face-to-face delivery to return consistently. Alliance Learning continues to implement both online and face-to-face delivery through a blended learning approach across all departments.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

- 1.9 Alliance Learning fully recognises its responsibilities for child and vulnerable adult safeguarding. Leaders and Managers have responded swiftly to the review of sexual harassment and violence in schools through staff and learner training, as well as clearer policies and procedures that stipulate all harmful and sexual behaviour is unacceptable.

**NO OF LEARNERS ON PROGRAMME (MARCH 2022)**

2.0

<b>Subject Sector</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Engineering Standard</b>	Level 3 Engineering Technician-Mechatronics (Standard)	40
	Level 3 Engineering Technician- Advanced Machinist (Standard)	
	Level 3 Metal Fabricator (Standard)	67
	Level 3 Maintenance, Operations Engineering Technician (Standard)	45
	Level 3 Engineering Fitter (Standard)	19
	Lean Manufacturing Operations (Standard)	5
<b>Engineering Framework</b>	Level 3 Extended Diploma Engineering Maintenance (Framework)	20
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering (Framework)	9
	Level 3 Extended Diploma in Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Framework)	13
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Technical Support (Framework)	32
	Level 2 Diploma Performing Engineering Operations (Framework)	1
	Level 2 Diploma Performing Manufacturing Operations (Framework)	1
<b>Business Administration Standard</b>	Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration	46
<b>Business Administration Framework</b>	Level 4 Diploma in Business Administration	2
<b>Customer Service Standard</b>	Level 2 Customer Service	10
	Level 3 Customer Service	0
<b>Management</b>	Level 3 Team Leader	6
	Level 5 Operational Manager	13
<b>Childcare</b>	Early Years Educator (Standard)	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>331</b>

## SECTION 2: OVERALL GRADES

### OVERALL GRADES

<b>ASPECT</b>	
	<b>GRADE</b>
Overall Effectiveness	<b>2</b>
Quality of Education	<b>2</b>
Behaviour and Attitudes	<b>2</b>
Personal Development	<b>2</b>
Leadership and Management	<b>2</b>
Safeguarding	<b>Effective</b>
<b>PROVISION TYPE</b>	
Apprenticeships	<b>2</b>

<b>CURRICULUM AREA</b>	
	<b>GRADE</b>
Business Administration and Customer Service	<b>2</b>
Business Management	<b>2</b>
Engineering	<b>2</b>
Childcare	<b>2</b>

## SECTION 3: QUALITY OF EDUCATION

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### KEY STRENGTHS

#### INTENT

- 3.1 A well designed curriculum gives learners, including those with socio-economic or learning disadvantage, the knowledge, and skills they need to succeed in learning, independent living, life, and work and sets out what they will need to know and do by the end of their programmes, to achieve their technical and vocational ambitions.
- 3.2 The curriculum is relevant and in line with local labour market intelligence to address socio-economic issues relevant to the Greater Manchester Skills Strategy. To further enhance our curriculum intent, validation panels were implemented in 2019 to ensure the above is continuously met via an annual cycle and this process continues to evolve over time.
- 3.3 Milestone trackers clearly demonstrate how the curriculum is planned and sequenced with clear identification of mini gateways for formative assessment and progress checks.
- 3.4 Subject Specialist Tutors (SSTs) complete the enrolment of all Apprentices to ensure a comprehensive Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours skills scan is completed to establish what learners already know and can do and links to the milestone trackers. Plans ensure we can meet the changing needs and circumstances of Apprentices and employers.
- 3.5 The curriculum is planned to ensure that learners are supported for future progression opportunities by developing transferable skills; for example, our Business Management learners undertake additional Mental Health Training which they can use to support their own staff.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

- 3.6 Tutors are experts in their subjects. They use their industry knowledge effectively to promote learning and take part in regular staff development activities that improve their teaching practice. As part of our commitment to professional development of our staff, Alliance Learning introduced a Level 5 Teaching Academy in 2019 to further enhance and standardise its approach to Professional Standards expected for Teachers and Trainers and this has resulted in fully qualified tutors. Due to the impact of the programme the second cohort academy started in 2022 to enable all new tutors to gain their teaching qualification and improve their teaching practice.
- 3.7 Curriculum Leaders and the Quality of Education Leader undertakes regular and meaningful Quality Assurance activity, including learning walks, deep dives, and work scrutiny to ensure that teachers are demonstrating their expertise, and where any gaps are identified, swift action is taken to address these through CPD.
- 3.8 Sessions are well-planned, in line with the Milestone tracker, to ensure that activities are sequenced logically. Particularly in skills development, repetition is utilised to ensure learners can commit key concepts to their long-term memory and apply them fluently in the workplace, for example marking-out of datum points and drilling in the Engineering Technician Standard.
- 3.9 Learners benefit from high quality activities and teachers' very good subject and industry skills and experience, which deepen and consolidate learning and progress. Learning is frequently checked through questioning and discussion and is utilised to encourage effort and learning by mistakes. Assessment practice in the workplace is well planned. Tutors ask probing questions to determine apprentices' wider understanding of topics and develop their analytical and problem-solving skills.

## IMPACT

- 3.10 Learners are prepared for the next stage of education, employment, or training. They gain qualifications and meet the standards to go on to destinations that meet their interests and aspirations and the goal of their course of study. For example, 83% of apprentices who achieved in 2020/2021 have received a pay-rise and 76% have been given a promotion or more responsibility such as becoming a team leader or mentor.
- 3.11 Leaders and Managers successfully managed the transition of face-to-face curriculum delivery to online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. During the lockdown period, curriculum leaders and managers re-sequenced the curriculum to delay practical training and deliver theoretical knowledge remotely. This resulted in some delays to learners undertaking End Point Assessments however, End Point Assessment outcomes for 2020/2021 were outstanding in Business and Professional Apprenticeships with 93% of apprentices achieving a Merit or higher and 80% achieving a Distinction.

## ACHIEVEMENT RATES 2020/2021

Overall Achievement	
<b>Company</b>	72.67%
<b>Engineering</b>	72.22%
<b>Business Administration</b>	67.65%
<b>Business Management</b>	76.47%
<b>Customer Service</b>	75%
<b>Childcare</b>	74.19%

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 3.12 Strengthen Achievement Rates for 2021/2022.
- 3.13 Further enhance the validation process for curriculum.
- 3.14 Better recording of Off the Job training.
- 3.15 Development of VLE to enhance the curriculum.
- 3.16 Skills developed in the training centre are better promoted better in the workplace through improved employer engagement including the training centre tutors.
- 3.17 Further enhance individual support for learning by ensuring all teachers and support staff are working effectively together for the benefit of learners.

## SECTION 4:

# BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

## **BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES**

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- 4.1 Alliance Learning has high expectations of learners' behaviour and conduct during both face-to-face sessions and remote sessions. This is outlined within the learner disciplinary procedure and applied consistently and fairly. Any disciplinary action is communicated in collaboration with the employer to quickly improve the behaviour of learners.
- 4.2 Staff are conscientious about learner needs and are trained to be able to spot changes in attitude and behaviour which may be a sign that a learner needs support and staff understand the processes to follow in such instances, for example, referral to the Safeguarding team.
- 4.3 Face-to-face sessions and remote sessions both have high learner attendance, with an average of 90% for 2020/2021. Punctuality of learners attending Alliance Learning has improved, particularly in Engineering. More robust tracking and data analysis, including improved liaison with employers and an improved, rigorous disciplinary policy has contributed to this.
- 4.4 Learner behaviour is good, and most learners demonstrate high levels of motivation to succeed. Learner behaviours are discussed at every review with the learner and the employer to ensure all parties are committed to supporting the learner to develop positive attitudes and behaviours and identify key areas of strength and improvement.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 4.5 Improvement in employability skills, such as attitudes to learning, to reduce learners leaving programmes early.
- 4.6 Continue to improve the punctuality of learners in Engineering.

## SECTION 5:

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

### KEY STRENGTHS

- 5.1 Through regular reviews subject specialist tutors provide relevant advice and guidance to learners to prepare them for life in modern society. This includes coaching around how to protect themselves and others from radicalisation and extremism, British Values and Protected Characteristics.
- 5.2 Our Disability Employer status highlights our focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and evidences our commitment to providing a complete learning programme that is free from any form of discrimination, of which we have zero tolerance.
- 5.3 Apprentices benefit from programmes that are well planned to support development of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, including confidence and resilience; for example, group and individual presentation skills are embedded into activity planning to build a learner's confidence. Growth mindset informs the way feedback is provided through "yet" and "not yet" to encourage effort, learning from mistakes and developing resilience.
- 5.4 Safeguarding officers, leaders and managers are qualified Mental Health First Aiders, ensuring all staff and learners are well supported, thus creating a positive culture for mental health and well-being.
- 5.5 All tutors have received internal mental health training to provide a better understanding of how to support learners; help them to stay mentally healthy and how to quickly spot signs that a learner may need support and deal with it effectively.
- 5.6 The importance of safe sex and healthy relationships, especially the safe use of social media and messaging services when in a relationship, is part of monthly review topics. Learners complete a Healthy Relationships VLE to embed the importance of protecting themselves and promoting appropriate behaviours with others.

- 5.7 During their programme, learners are supported well, with ongoing Careers IAG through regular reviews with the learner and employer. This prepares them for future success in education, employment, or training.
- 5.8 Our partnership with Bolton College and The University of Bolton expands our portfolio and offers most candidates a clear pathway of progression from their starting points through to Degree Apprenticeships in line with their career choices and aspirations.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 5.9 Continue to improve the information given on healthy relationships and sex education.
- 5.10 More needs to be done to engage with parents/guardians/carers of 16/17 year olds at the start of their programme to support career choices and on-programme engagement.
- 5.11 Improve promotion of physical exercise and healthy eating.

## SECTION 6: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### KEY STRENGTHS

- 6.1 Leaders and Managers have sustained a drive to maintain quality and standards during the further lockdown period whilst ensuring the wellbeing of learners was a top priority.
- 6.2 The Board, senior leaders and curriculum management teams have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training for apprenticeships, which can be evidenced through the outstanding EPA Outcomes in the Business and Professional sector.
- 6.3 Alliance Learning's meaningful Mission Statement, Vision and Company Values underpin the curriculum and expected performance of staff and learners, which forms part of effective performance management.
- 6.4 The Quality of Education cycle effectively supports new and existing teachers' vocational and teaching subject expertise and knowledge over time, to fulfil their CPD requirements highlighted through appraisals, OTLA and learner and employer voice. This ensures tutors continue to deliver high-quality education and training.
- 6.5 Strong commitment to professional development of our staff can be evidenced through the ongoing cycles of Quality of Education, underpinned by robust performance management i.e., observations of teaching, learning and assessment, work scrutiny, deep dives, one to ones, annual appraisals and learner and employer voice.
- 6.6 Strong commitment to professional development has resulted in a second cohort of the Level 5 Teaching Academy enabling all new tutors to gain their teaching qualification and improve their teaching practice, whilst utilising the partnership with the University of Bolton group to aspire to Degree Level teaching status.
- 6.7 The senior leadership team ensures that managers and curriculum staff are held to account for the quality of provision as well as close monitoring of caseloads, data management, learner journey and the quality of education. This is evidenced through monthly curriculum performance meetings with all delivery staff, curriculum managers and senior managers.

These include a focus on tutor caseloads to ensure they are monitored and managed effectively.

- 6.8 Effective progress reviews allow SSTs to evaluate progress over time through meaningful reviews, including the learner scorecard, between tutor, learner, and employer.
- 6.9 Learners have started to benefit further from an improved induction process which utilises the expertise of the Subject Specialist Tutor to plan the curriculum based on previous knowledge, skills and behaviours of the learners and employers' individual requirements.

## **GOVERNANCE**

- 6.10 The Board has a clear focus on learners and apprentices and their intended outcomes. The Chief Executive provides honest, detailed, and accurate information to the Board through reporting at full Board meetings which take place every other month. Board members are well informed about all aspects of the provision and are therefore able to understand its strengths and weaknesses. The Chair of the Board, together with all members of the Board, is responsible for creating strong accountability for the Chief Executive, Business Executive, Senior Management Team and associated staff. Members of the Board challenge leaders and managers to be responsive to local economic needs to improve progression opportunities.
- 6.11 Annual strategic meetings are held between the Board, Executives and Senior Management Team to provide support and direction regarding Alliance Learning's aims and objectives.
- 6.12 All members of the Board have undertaken annual training in Safeguarding and the Prevent Duty and there is one member of the Board who is Designated Safeguarding Board Member and attends Safeguarding meetings twice a year to provide support and challenge to the Safeguarding team.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

- 6.13 Safeguarding is effective and robust arrangements are in place to support learners with safeguarding concerns, as well as to deal with potential allegations about staff members, employers, or other learners.
- 6.14 Leaders and Managers ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all staff, including a comprehensive scrutiny of job applicants' suitability and thorough reference checks.
- 6.15 Staff are trained to hold appropriate and effective discussions with learners in line with the Mental Health First Aid ALGEE plan.
- 6.16 All Safeguarding staff, together with managers, have undertaken fully accredited Mental Health First Aid training to equip themselves to deal with disclosures and any concerns that may be raised.
- 6.17 All safeguarding concerns are logged and monitored at monthly meetings. The Board is provided with an anonymised monthly update of safeguarding themes and provide effective support and challenge. Good links have been established with the local Police Prevent Co-ordinator to identify risks in the area and all staff have undertaken ACT Awareness training by the Counter Terrorism Police. Apprentice employers are encouraged to undertake the ACT e-learning course to be able to keep their apprentices safe.
- 6.18 British Values are promoted well to develop and sustain a culture of tolerance and respect. Apprentices benefit from good discussions about treating individuals fairly and respecting differences, such as differences in beliefs and gender.
- 6.19 Managers have ensured that all delivery staff are confident about promoting values such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. As a result, delivery staff promote British Values confidently and effectively by making them relevant to apprentices' experiences, for example by discussing current affairs and 'Hot Topics'.
- 6.20 Promotion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is good. Staff receive annual training on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Safeguarding/Prevent to allow them confidence in relating to a variety of differing groups.

- 6.21 There is a strong focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing via staff training, which supports and removes barriers to learners achieving. Internal staff training also supports staff members to understand their own mental health and strategies they can use to support themselves.
- 6.22 Safeguarding/Prevent topics discussed during reviews tackle issues such as bullying, discrimination drugs, domestic violence, mental health, and wellbeing. Monthly topics for debate are communicated with delivery staff to engage debate and encourage personal growth for learners.
- 6.23 Learners feel safe and are confident that we will address and support them with any concerns they may have about their own wellbeing or the wellbeing of others.
- 6.24 Policies and procedures make it clear that all harmful sexual behaviour is unacceptable. Staff training specifically addresses sexual violence and sexual harassment, online abuse, drink spiking and consent. All learners are supported to report their concerns about sexual harassment and violence and all concerns are taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately. Learners complete a Healthy Relationships VLE to embed the importance of protecting themselves and promoting appropriate behaviours with others.
- 6.25 The Sophos Appliance system promotes safe internet usage, to block access to unsuitable websites to further protect learners. Extensions to the system are now being implemented so that alerts are sent instantly to the safeguarding team.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 6.26 Improved training for employers on Prevent.
- 6.27 Strengthen the ambition for learners that are difficult to engage.
- 6.28 Further work is needed to engage parents to support education and training learners receive at starting points and throughout the programme.
- 6.29 Continue to strengthen the Board through expansion of expertise in new curriculum areas.

## SECTION 7: DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEWS

## **APPRENTICESHIPS**

### **ENGINEERING**

Alliance Learning has 252 apprentices in this area. Tutors have extensive and up-to date industry knowledge which leads to good quality teaching, learning and assessment. The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced, and tutors have made good use of online delivery in response to Covid-19; adapting their teaching and delivery styles effectively to ensure learners continue to build sufficient knowledge and skills. The facilities and resources available to the learners allows them to develop their practical skills to industry standards. Attendance rates are very good, and punctuality has improved since 2019/2020 through robust employer liaison and a rigorous learner disciplinary policy.

### **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

Alliance Learning has 19 apprentices in this area. The curriculum is well-planned and sequenced, utilising comprehensive resources and qualifications at the employers' request from CMI, preparing learners for associate status. Tutors have made good use of online delivery in response to Covid-19; adapting their teaching and delivery styles effectively to ensure learners continue to build sufficient knowledge and skills. There are strong employer relationships to co-design the curriculum and include enrichment opportunities such as mental health training. Tutors have extensive knowledge in the subjects that they teach which leads to very good quality teaching, learning and assessment. Learner engagement is high resulting in high aspirations and expectations of what they can achieve. This is evidenced in the very good outcomes at End Point Assessment with 18 Distinction achievements and 12 merit achievements to date.

## **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION/CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Alliance Learning has 58 apprentices in this area. The curriculum is well planned which has resulted in outstanding End Point Assessment grades; to date 100% of learners have achieved Distinctions. Teaching, Learning and Assessment is good. Tutors have made good use of online delivery in response to Covid-19; adapting their teaching and delivery styles effectively to ensure learners continue to build sufficient knowledge and skills. Feedback is motivational with clear advice on how to improve, although learner responses required more reflection. Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good with learners making good progress from their starting points, developing confidence and self-esteem.

## **CHILDCARE**

Alliance Learning has 5 apprentices remaining in this area.

Overall and Timely achievement rates have improved in 2020/2021 to 75%. The curriculum has been restructured to meet the individual needs of the remaining learners on programme. This has resulted in positive outcomes and learner engagement. Tutors have extensive experience and up-to date industry knowledge which leads to good quality teaching, learning and assessment. This is evidenced in the End Point Assessment outcomes with 100% distinction rate year to date.

Leaders and Managers have made the strategic decision to no longer offer this provision due to the continued low numbers. Most apprentices enrolled at Alliance Learning were transferred to Bolton College as part of the University of Bolton Group partnership to ensure a seamless transition.

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- 7.1 Attendance for Off-the-Job training is good on Engineering, Business Management and Business Administration.
- 7.2 EPA outcomes are outstanding on Business Management, Business Administration, and Customer Service.
- 7.3 Tutors have extensive and up-to date industry knowledge which leads to good quality teaching, learning and assessment.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 7.4 Strengthen the recording of off -the-job training across all departments.
- 7.5 Improve Employer Engagement to better link on and off the job training.