



SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

2019-2020

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION

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 also follow the below 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 are 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 offer Higher Apprenticeships in Engineering and Business and Professional Administration and Business Management.
- 1.3 Alliance Learning had 356 apprentices enrolled onto an apprenticeship across all programmes as of 31st July 2020.

THE BOLTON BOUROUGH: KEY STATISTICS

- 1.4 Bolton has a population of 285,400. 19.1% 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. Almost 43% of the borough's population lives in neighbourhoods that are amongst the 25% most deprived in England and Wales.
- 1.5 In Bolton, the percentage of people on main out of work benefits is 14.3% which is higher than the rate for the North West (13.2%) and significantly higher than the national rate of (11.0%).

- 1.6 There are approximately 196,000 economically active people living in Bolton; 8,000 (2.5%) of these are unemployed. 69,000 (20%) of residents aged 16 and over do not hold a qualification and approximately 50% of residents do not hold a qualification at level 3 or above. 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 Bolton has areas of high levels of deprivation and has a higher unemployment rate than both the North West and Great Britain as a whole. Many of our learners face multiple barriers to their learning and Alliance Learning is successful in supporting them to achieve their learning aims

NO OF LEARNERS ON PROGRAMME (AS AT 31.07.20)

1.8

Subject Sector	Programme	Number
Engineering	Level 3 Engineering Technician-Mechatronics (Standard)	26
	Level 3 Engineering Technician- Advanced Machinist (Standard)	
	Level 3 Metal Fabricator (Standard)	14
	Level 3 Maintenance, Operations Engineering Technician (Standard)	12
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Engineering Manufacture (Framework)	2
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Engineering Maintenance (Framework)	37
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering (Framework)	24
	Level 3 Extended Diploma in Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Framework)	30
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Technical Support (Framework)	47
	Level 3 Extended Diploma Fabrication and Welding (Framework)	8
	Level 2 Diploma Performing Engineering Operations (Framework)	14
	Level 2 Diploma Performing Manufacturing Operations (Framework)	13
Business Management	Level 3 Team Leader (Standard)	17
	Level 5 Operational Manager (Standard)	17
Business Administration	Level 2 Diploma in Business Administration (Framework)	1
	Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration (Standard)	39
	Level 4 Diploma in Business Administration	5
	Level 3 Certificate in Learning and Development (Framework)	1
Customer Service	Level 3 Customer Service (Framework)	1
	Level 2 Customer Service (Standard)	4
Health and Social Care	Level 2 Diploma in Adult Health and Social Care	2
Childcare	Early Years Practitioner (Framework)	27
	Early Years Educator (Framework)	7
	Early Years Educator (Standard)	8
Total		356

DISTANCE TRAVELLED

Short Inspection Letter (May 2017)

1.9 Ofsted recommendations for improvement and distance travelled (May 2017):

‘Managers implement effective actions to improve the quality of teaching, training, learning and assessment that apprentices on health and social care programmes receive, so that they make good progress and achieve.’

1.10 Distance travelled:

- A strategic decision was made to no longer offer the Health and Social Care provision from January 2018
- Implementation of monthly performance board to challenge quality and progress of learners.
- Learners removed from programme who were not engaged to allow focus on remaining learners.
- This resulted in increased overall and timely achievement rates.

‘Staff evaluating the quality of teaching and learning focus on the impact of teaching and training practices on apprentices’ vocational skills development.’

1.11 Distance travelled:

- Implementation of the new Quality of Education process and appointment of Quality of Education Leader to validate curriculum for quality assurance of all pedagogical approaches as well as intent, implementation and impact of all our programmes.
- Introduction of Teaching Academy to upskill assessors to tutors as well as utilising this for existing qualified teachers to enhance their delivery.

- Individual delivery staff interviews at the start of each funding year inform regular and meaningful staff CPD in relation to their vocational development.
- Best Practice continues to be shared with all delivery staff on an ongoing basis, including the implementation of Growth Mindset to inform the way feedback is provided through “yet” and “not yet” to encourage effort, learning from mistakes and develop resilience.

‘All LDOs check thoroughly apprentices’ depth of understanding and knowledge and the quality of their written work to ensure that apprentices achieve their potential.’

1.12

Distance travelled:

- New Quality of Education process includes a focus on deep dives of sector areas to ensure Apprentices are developing significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours and are making good progress.
- Monthly curriculum performance meetings identify key themes from Quality of Education activity.
- Improved use of ‘Journal Entries’ at the end of sessions on the e-portfolio, with reflective evaluation being implemented at the end of each session to highlight what is being learned and linking this to off the job training.

Managers develop effective arrangements to ensure that all apprentices receive their on- and off-the-job training entitlements.

1.13

Distance travelled:

- An ‘off the job’ training plan, including commitment statement, is completed in collaboration with the learner and employer at the beginning of the apprenticeship programme to ensure that entitlement is planned to meet all areas of development.

- Milestone trackers complement the commitment statement and set clear expectations for targets and training entitlements.
- Monthly curriculum performance meetings for each subject area complement the above and identify issues with shortfalls against training entitlements and ensure action is taken.
- Improved use of 'Journal Entries' at the end of sessions on the e-portfolio, with reflective evaluation being implemented at the end of each session to highlight what is being learned and linking this to off the job training.

SECTION 2:

OVERALL GRADES

OVERALL GRADES

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

CURRICULUM AREA	
	GRADE
Business Administration and Customer Service	2
Business Management	2
Engineering	2
Childcare	2

SECTION 3:

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

KEY STRENGTHS

- 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 Our curriculum is relevant and in line with local labour market intelligence to address socio economic issues relevant to the geographical areas of delivery. 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 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 informs the milestone trackers. Plans are fluid to ensure we are able to meet the changing needs and circumstances of Apprentices and employers.
- 3.5 The introduction of CognAssist provides more information about barriers to learning and individual needs a learner may have, learners utilise online learning strategies each month to provide support for barriers. Emerging evidence shows that engagement for the strategies is very good however it is too soon to judge the impact of this.
- 3.6 Curriculum is also planned to ensure that learners are supported for future progression opportunities by developing transferable skills; for example, our Early Years Level 3 apprentices are encouraged to use Harvard referencing within their work to prepare them for potential progression to Foundation Degree programmes.

- 3.7 More needs to be done to encourage learners with high needs and disabilities onto apprenticeships. Alliance Learning recognises this has become accredited as a 'Disability confident employer'.
- 3.8 Tutors are experts in their subjects. They hold appropriate teaching qualifications. Tutors use their industry knowledge effectively to promote learning. Tutors 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 has introduced a Level 5 Teaching Academy to further enhance and standardise its approach to Professional Standards expected for Teachers and Trainers and this will result in fully qualified tutors.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 Sessions are well-planned, in line with the Milestone tracker to ensure that activities are sequenced logically. Particularly in the area of 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
- 3.11 Subject Specialist Tutors ensure that skills developed in our training sessions are taken back to the workplace to be practised further, undertaking 12-weekly learner scorecards to measure progress so there is a clear link between understanding and application of skills.
- 3.12 As part of our commitment to the Quality of Education, staff are receiving training on Growth Mindset to be resilient, apply effort and understand that learning and reflection on mistakes and misunderstandings is a key process of long-term understanding.
- 3.13 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.

- 3.14 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, promotion, increased responsibilities, and salary increases.
- 3.15 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 2019/2020 were outstanding in Business and Administration apprenticeships (including Management) with 88% of learners achieving a Merit or Higher and 74% of learners achieving a Distinction.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 3.16 Strengthen Achievement Rates for 2020/2021.
- 3.17 Further enhance the validation process for curriculum.
- 3.18 Better recording of Off the Job training.
- 3.19 Development of VLE to enhance the curriculum.
- 3.20 Further enhance individual support for learning by ensuring all teachers and support staff are working effectively together for the benefit of learners.
- 3.21 Improve collection of learner destination data.

SECTION 4:

BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES

KEY STRENGTHS

- 4.1 Alliance Learning has high expectations of learner's 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 to the Safeguarding team.
- 4.3 Learners have high attendance to face-to-face sessions and remote sessions with an average of 97% attendance for 2019/2020. Punctuality of learners attending Alliance Learning has improved particularly in Engineering on the previous year. More robust tracking and data analysis, including improved liaison with employers and an improved rigorous disciplinary policy has contributed to this.
- 4.4 Learner behaviours, including motivation are continuously observed and assessed across our programmes. 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 to reduce learners leaving programmes early.
- 4.6 Punctuality of learners in Engineering.

SECTION 5:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

KEY STRENGTHS

- 5.1 Meaningful regular reviews by subject specialist tutors provide advice and guidance to learners to prepare them for life in modern society. This includes coaching so learners understand how to protect themselves and others from radicalisation and extremism, British Values and Protected Characteristics.
- 5.2 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 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.
- 5.3 The recent introduction of CognAssist to support 8 domains of the brain supports learners to remove barriers to learning, which positively impacts mental health by reducing frustration and stress.
- 5.4 Safeguarding officers, leaders and managers are qualified Mental Health First Aiders, to support staff in their roles. 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.
- 5.5 Alliance Learning have engaged with local initiatives such as “Working Wardrobe” to provide disadvantaged candidates with suitable clothing for job interviews, as well as interview techniques. Due to Covid-19 this has not been utilised however the relationship is still in place.
- 5.6 Alliance Learning are now part of The University of Bolton Group which also includes Bolton College. The Group continues to work collaboratively in developing the delivery of apprenticeship standards. This collaborative approach offers seamless pathways to progression onto higher and degree apprenticeships, including Higher Education, which

demonstrates our high expectations for our learner's career choices and aspirations. These opportunities are discussed through regular reviews with the learner and employer.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 5.7 Improvement to Information given on healthy relationships and sex education.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 Improve promotion of physical exercise and healthy eating.

SECTION 6: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

KEY STRENGTHS

- 6.1 The Board, senior and curriculum management teams have a strong oversight of the curriculum offer and a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training for apprenticeships. Alliance Learning Mission Statement, Vision and company values underpin the curriculum and expected performance of staff and learners.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The senior team ensures that managers and curriculum staff are held accountable 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 manager and senior managers. These include a focus on tutor caseloads to ensure they are monitored and managed effectively.
- 6.5 Learner and employer engagement is good, and 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 the employer individual requirements.

GOVERNANCE

- 6.6 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 on a regular basis and a full Board meeting takes place bi-monthly. Board members are well informed about all aspects of the provision and therefore are able to understand strengths and weaknesses. The Chair of the Board, together with all members of the Board of Trustees is responsible for creating strong accountability for the Chief Executive and Business Executive and Senior Management Team and associated staff. Members of the Board challenge leaders and managers in being responsive to local economic needs to improve progression opportunities.
- 6.7 Annual strategic meetings are held between the Board, Executives and Senior Management Team to provide support and direction with regard to Alliance Learning's aims, objectives and curriculum offer, to ensure it meets local and national priorities.
- 6.8 All members of the Board have undertaken training in Safeguarding and the Prevent Duty and there are 2 members of the Board who are Designated Safeguarding Board Members; attending Safeguarding meetings Bi-Annually to provide support and challenge to the Safeguarding team, as well as ensuring the safety and safeguarding of learners.

SAFEGUARDING

- 6.9 Safeguarding is effective and robust arrangements are in place to support learners with safeguarding concerns, as well as to deal with allegations about staff members or other learners. Learners feel safe and are generally confident that we will address and support them with any concerns they may have about their own wellbeing or the wellbeing of others. There is a strong focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing via staff training, which supports and removes barriers to learners achieving.

- 6.10 Staff are trained to hold discussions with learners in line with the Mental Health First Aid ALGEE plan. 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.
- 6.11 All safeguarding concerns are logged and monitored at the monthly meetings. The Board are 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.
- 6.12 British Values are promoted well in order 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.
- 6.13 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'.
- 6.14 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. 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.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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

SECTION 7:

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEWS

APPRENTICESHIPS

ENGINEERING

Alliance Learning has 234 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 light of 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 2018/2019 through robust employer liaison and a rigorous learner disciplinary policy. Strong relationships with external professionals have led to the co-creation of the curriculum meeting local and national industry demand.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Alliance Learning has 36 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 light of 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. This is evidenced in the very good outcomes at End Point Assessment with four Distinction achievements and six merit achievements to date.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION/CUSTOMER SERVICE

Alliance Learning has 49 apprentices in this area. The curriculum is well planned which has resulted in outstanding End Point Assessment grades; to date 82% of learners have achieved Distinctions. Teaching, Learning and Assessment is good. Tutors have made good use of online delivery in light of 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 25 apprentices in this area. This department is still delivering frameworks at Level 2 and has transitioned to standards at Level 3. Overall and Timely achievement rates have improved in 2019/2020 to 71% however the department has experienced consecutive maternity staff turnover and whilst it has been managed to ensure learners have been supported; the continuity of this has resulted in slow progress across the department.

Tutors have extensive experience and up-to date industry knowledge which leads to good quality teaching, learning and assessment. Tutors have made good use of online delivery in light of Covid-19, adapting their delivery to meet learner and employer needs. Feedback to learners is good with 360-degree feedback from employers showing good commitment to developing learners' knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

KEY STRENGTHS

- 7.1 Attendance for Off the Job training is good on Engineering, Business Management and Business Administration.
- 7.2 Apprentices receive good quality teaching, learning and assessment across all departments.
- 7.3 EPA outcomes are outstanding on Business Management, Business Administration and Customer Service.
- 7.4 Apprentices receive detailed feedback on work that is assessed through one file which enables them to improve and enhance their work. Apprentices on childcare receive 360-degree feedback on observations.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 7.5 Strengthen the recording of off the job training across all departments.
- 7.6 Strengthen employer relationships through the review process across all departments.
- 7.7 Improve attendance for day release on Childcare.
- 7.8 Improve learner progress on Childcare.
- 7.9 Further develop the curriculum sequencing on Childcare.