

## Preparing for Inspection

All providers have been through Inspection in one form or another and some are “old hands” having experienced many visits from the Training Standards Council, the Adult Learning Inspectorate and now Ofsted.

There have been various developments since 1998, mostly for the better with standards in work-based learning getting ever higher, poorer provision being largely eradicated and good practice being highlighted and shared across the sector. The time that inspectors spend with a provider is now shorter than the initial visits and numbers of inspectors have gradually dropped over time, lifting the heavy handed approach that was criticised in the early stages. Inspectors too have developed and increased their knowledge of the sector, making the overall experience now much more focused and valuable.

There are as always, questions about the future of inspection and what it will continue to develop into, but for the time being it is still here and we will all at some point receive notification of a forthcoming visit, for which we need to prepare.

It is always good to remember that inspectors want to come and see what you do and how well you do it, they do not want to see fabricated delivery, new systems and rapidly prepared documents that wouldn't usually exist. Inspection is about your everyday job and how your learners progress through your provision and ultimately achieve a relevant qualification in a timely manner.

The new Ofsted are no different, their inspectors want to see the same things that TSC and ALI inspectors saw, only now that most providers are experienced at inspection, they expect to see a high standard of quality and excellent retention and achievement. There have been a few changes to the areas that are graded, but these are to ensure providers are given the opportunity to show how they will continue to improve their provision in between visits.

All providers now receive an overall effectiveness grade, which is based on all the other grades awarded through the inspection, taking a holistic view of the provision. Capacity to improve is graded and is based predominantly on the self-assessment process and accuracy of the report against the inspection findings. It also looks at quality improvement activity and how successful this is and how much the provider has improved since the last inspection. Achievement and standards is given a grade, taken from the sector subject areas and the information on success rates and progression of learners, focusing on key question one of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). Quality of provision is given a grade, taken from the main text from the

sector subject areas, focusing on key questions two, three and four of the CIF. Leadership and management is graded as previously, focusing on key question five of the CIF. Within leadership and management is a contributory grade awarded for equality of opportunity. Each sector subject area is then awarded a grade.

Inspectors no longer identify weaknesses, but areas for improvement as this is a term that better reflects the findings, so under each grade in the report will be the bullet strengths and areas for improvement followed by text to back them up and show normal practice.

When a work-based learning provider is selected for inspection they will receive the usual maximum three months notice, giving an indication of the month that the visit will take place. This will be followed by contact from the Lead Inspector who will arrange a planning meeting and firm up dates for the inspection. Inspections are planned using information taken from the Provider Gateway, so whatever information is uploaded is accessible to the inspectors. The Lead Inspector will attend the planning meeting with a view about the provision, based on LSC statistics and the provider's self-assessment report (SAR) and development plan. The importance of the SAR cannot be stressed enough, as inspectors place a lot of emphasis on the provider's view of themselves and the quality of the provision. It is therefore vital to ensure the SAR is a true reflection of what actually happens on a day to day basis and highlights the real strengths and areas for improvement based on a sound process involving all staff. There are few providers now that produce an SAR based on one person's views of the organisation with no contributions from other staff, these documents will now go against the provider as the capacity to improve grade will be affected. It is important to remember also, that the quality improvement plan shows how your organisation will move forward and improve, therefore Inspectors will be very interested in how you propose to tackle the areas for improvement and also to build on your strengths. They will also look closely at how an organisation has progressed since their last inspection. It is useful to prepare a brief outline showing what has improved, highlighting the main changes to delivery, based on the last findings and for this to be presented to inspectors on the first morning of an inspection.

After the planning meeting the Lead Inspector will pull together a pre inspection report, giving themes that inspectors will base their initial impressions of the organisation on. This will be shared with the nominee prior to the inspection.

Activity through the inspection is largely unchanged from the old ALL days with inspectors triangulating evidence, wanting to speak to learners, employers, staff and sub-contractors, observing training and

assessment and looking at documentary evidence before making their judgements.

The grading meeting is different with Ofsted as there are more areas to be graded. At the meeting inspectors will complete a form called a Work-Based Learning Record of Main findings Form (RMF). This form requires a grade for every key question in the CIF, broken down by programme and sector. The form (attached at annex 1) is a useful tool for those providers preparing for inspection as it shows exactly what inspectors will be looking at and you can make sure that you can produce evidence to support each of the statements.

Most inspectors like the nominee to have sight of the report before they leave the premises after an inspection, so that they know the organisation is happy with the content. Publication of the report is usually five to six weeks after the inspection. You no longer receive a bound, hard copy; the report will merely be posted onto the Ofsted website.

For those providers selected for inspection, PiP can help with preparations by assisting with self-assessment reports and development plans, talking to staff about what to expect, sampling reviews, assessments and training to give an external view of what is good and what might need improving and generally offering any support needed in the run up period. Please give us a call on 01904 557 601 to discuss what support you would like. We have an inspector working with us who is happy to share her knowledge and experience with providers. We also have a growing number of grade one providers in York and North Yorkshire, so let's keep working together to continually improve our provision and be one of the best performing sub-regions in the country.

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**[Click Here](#)** to view Ofsted WBL Record of Main Findings Form