

Midlothian Council

A report by HM Inspectors on the external review of training in Modern Apprenticeships in Social Services: Children and Young People

July 2019

The external review process

Key features of external review

External reviews will be structured according to the quality framework External quality arrangements for the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-Job and On-the-Job training, which can be found on Education Scotland's website.

Reviews will involve the ten core quality indicators, which provide the minimum requirements for Education Scotland to evaluate the delivery centre against the high-level questions. There will be scope for review teams to use other quality indicators in the framework in a proportionate way, depending on identification of risk or excellence or analysis of a centre's context.

Reviewers will report the outcome of external review visits in terms of strengths and areas for further development with grades awarded for each of the high-level questions. After each review visit to a centre, the team will provide a verbal feedback on key strengths and areas for development to senior managers and contractors. The Lead Inspector (LI) for the visit will discuss and agree with the review team provisional grades from the six point scale to assign a grade to each of the high-level questions.

These grades will be incorporated into the national report on the industry sector. The national report will have grades for each of the high-level questions. It will reflect findings from all of the delivery centre visits and will be published after all the review visits have taken place by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

This report contains the grades awarded by the team for the high-level questions:

- Grade 1 excellent – Outstanding and sector leading
- Grade 2 very good – Major strengths
- Grade 3 good – Important strengths with some areas for improvement
- Grade 4 satisfactory – Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Grade 5 weak – Important weaknesses
- Grade 6 unsatisfactory – Major weaknesses

Grades will be awarded in the following areas:

- **Outcomes and Impact**
 1. How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?
 2. How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?
- **Delivery of training**
 3. How good is our delivery of training?
 4. How good is our management of training delivery?
- **Leadership and quality culture**
 5. How good is our strategic leadership?

Introduction

The external review

The review of Midlothian Council by Education Scotland took place during April and May 2019

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the quality of the apprentice experience. We evaluated these against the three high level principles of Outcomes and Impact, Service Delivery and Leadership and Quality Culture; using the ten reference quality indicators outlined in External quality arrangements for the review of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-Job and On-the-Job training April 2017.

We found two examples of excellence which we describe in this report.

The external review team talked with apprentices, staff at all levels and employers.

The Centre and Its Context

In carrying out the external review of Midlothian Council, Education Scotland took the following context fully into account.

Midlothian Council delivers vocational education and training for the early learning and childcare workforce across the local authority which also includes professional updating training for external delivery partners. The centre is approved by the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) to deliver Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Social Services (Children and Young People) at Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 7. The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) Social Services (Children and Young People) programme is funded by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Midlothian Council are actively involved in South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC) and also work in partnership with secondary schools and colleges to support the delivery of programmes. The centre is expanding their contract to meet the proposed in of early learning and childcare provision across the local authority including the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) in early learning and childcare.

At the time of the review the centre had 45 apprentices in training.

Outcomes of external review

Grades were awarded in the following areas:

Outcomes and Impact	
How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	good
How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	good
Delivery of Training	
How good is our delivery of training?	very good
How good is our management of training delivery?	very good
Leadership and Quality Culture	
How good is our strategic leadership?	good

Outcomes and Impact

1. How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

How effective is the centre at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?

Areas of positive practice

- Centre staff take good account of local authority priorities and are responding well to the planned expansion of early learning and childcare. The MA programme is linked to local authority policy with an emphasis on children's rights and wellbeing.
- At the end of Quarter 2 (2018-19), there were four pathfinder apprentices in training, and almost all apprentices are making good progress in achieving their goals.
- The centre is on target to meet SDS contractual requirements and is increasing the number of MA starts to meet a proposed expansion of provision of early learning and childcare across the local authority.
- The centre has a dedicated team who deliver MA starts based on demand identified by the Council Workforce Group. Programme delivery is shared across two council departments and almost all apprentices make good progress in achieving their goals.
- The centre team manages system and administration requirements well. They provide accurate forecasting, reporting and monitoring of apprentice progress.
- There are low levels of apprentices withdrawing from the MA programme.

Areas for development

- Assessors do not formally assess apprentices until after their three month induction period. During this period there are no opportunities for apprentices to use their workplace experience to contribute towards unit and core skills evidence.

How well do centres adhere to statutory principles and guidance?

Areas of positive practice

- Arrangements for quality assurance are effective and satisfy awarding body requirements. There are robust procedures in place to ensure assessment strategies, standardisation, and Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) are fully compliant with quality assurance arrangements.
- Centre staff are aware of the requirements of local authority equality and diversity procedures and policies. They signpost these effectively to apprentices at induction and are proactive in ensuring they are promoted well as part of the MA programme.
- During induction, centre staff ensure apprentices have sufficient knowledge of health and safety, safeguarding and child protection which is reinforced and developed further as they progress through their qualification.

Areas for development

- Centre staff do not carry out initial assessments of additional support requirements until after the induction programme is complete. This limits opportunities to provide appropriate early interventions to support apprentices.

2. How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?

Areas of positive practice

- All apprentices participate in a comprehensive and well-structured initial induction programme over a three month period, including an appropriate balance of on and off-the-job training within different workplace settings. A small team of workforce development principal teachers, seconded from the local authority, lead the induction programme effectively to prepare apprentices for their designated workplace settings.
- Centre staff take good account of emerging priorities and have developed a number of useful professional updating courses for early learning and childcare managers and practitioners. All apprentices benefit from participating in these CLPL activities which are also delivered more widely across the local authority.
- Early learning and childcare managers within settings value the centre's rigorous approach to the recruitment and selection of apprentices. They also benefit from additional staffing arrangements, including mentoring and placement supervisory staff, which provide opportunities to refresh the professional knowledge of the team through information sharing during discussions with apprentices.
- Contract liaison staff monitor apprentice data effectively and accurately track apprentice progress to ensure contractual requirements are met.

Areas for development

- Apprentices do not formally commence their SVQ activities and assessments until after the initial three induction month period. The centre is fully aware of the area for development and have actively introducing actions to address the issue.

Delivery of training

3. How good is our delivery of training?

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

Areas of positive practice

- Midlothian Council have recently introduced their own comprehensive MA training programme based on their specific employer need within the local authority. This includes a three month induction programme, a three month transition award programme and a notional 12 month on-the-job SVQ component. These flexible arrangements provide apprentices with sufficient opportunities to develop their practice within the workplace.
- Centre managers and assessors support and encourage apprentices well to complete their MA programme. This includes peripatetic placement supervisors and setting based mentors who provide helpful support to apprentices within the workplace.
- All apprentices are motivated and are progressing their own learning well. They are gaining relevant on and off-the-job experience which is preparing them well for employment beyond their apprenticeship.
- Centre staff have developed detailed handbooks for apprentices, mentors, placement supervisors and managers which provide helpful information on the MA programme and outline clearly roles and responsibilities. These beneficial guides are used well by mentors and placement supervisors within workplace settings.
- All apprentices enter into a service level agreement at the start of their programme which provides information on their employment expectations on completion of the programme.
- Early learning and childcare managers and assessors discuss the optional units with apprentices that best reflect their assigned workplace settings. Apprentices value these opportunities to personalise their own learning.
- Placement supervisors encourage apprentices to document their experiences in reflective accounts and provide assistance in evaluative writing techniques. Apprentices complete reflective accounts after each progress meeting and agree actions with placement supervisors to consolidate their learning.
- Workforce development principal teachers support mentors and placement supervisors well and provide regular formal training workshops to equip early learning and childcare staff with appropriate skills to support apprentices within their workplace settings.

Areas for development

- There are no opportunities for apprentices to have their prior learning accredited to enable quicker qualification progression. Apprentices with relevant prior knowledge and experience feel frustrated with the pace of their learning.
- Most apprentices are unclear on how they are achieving their core skills elements within their programme.
- Assessors do not use reflective accounts produced by apprentices during induction to generate unit and core skills evidence. This is a missed opportunity.

How well is training delivered?

Areas of positive practice

- Assessors plan and deliver off-the-job training well, with a particular emphasis on ensuring learning is consolidated before progressing to the next activity or task. They include a good mix of staff delivery, lively discussion, questioning and sharing of ideas.
- Centre staff deliver a comprehensive schedule of engaging learning activities, with effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which are used to good effect to motivate apprentices.
- In all teaching sessions, staff encourage apprentices to share their workplace experience through class discussions. All apprentices are enjoying their programme and find their on and off-the-job training relevant and appropriately challenging.
- The learning environment is spacious and welcoming and apprentices use this area regularly for personal reflection and quiet study time. Centre staff are flexible, encouraging and approachable and support apprentices well.
- Relationships between all centre staff and apprentices are very purposeful and mutually respectful. This helps to promote a positive learning environment and supports apprentices in making good progress towards their goals.
- All apprentices value the professional knowledge and expertise of staff within the centre.
- Workforce development principal teachers and assessors use their professional knowledge well to contextualise learning, including core skills, and often cite informative examples from personal experience to illustrate practice.
- Regular reviews between apprentices and centre staff are used well to monitor and track progress. Apprentices use these reviews to provide assessors with helpful feedback on their progress which is used effectively to jointly plan next steps and workplace activities.
- Early learning and childcare managers and practitioners are very satisfied with the MA programme and would recommend the programme to prospective applicants.
- Assessors make good use of e-portfolio arrangements to record evidence and track progress. Assessors find this approach helpful in providing immediate access to review evidence and supply timeous feedback on submissions.

Areas for development

- Assessors do not carry out the screening of core skills requirements until after the three month induction stage. This is a missed opportunity to provide additional support for apprentices on commencement of their qualification.

How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?

Areas of positive practice

- Centre staff regularly evaluate the delivery of the programme based on feedback from apprentices and early learning and childcare managers and practitioners. They use a broad range of effective methods to gather useful feedback to help plan for improvement.
- A broad range of internal stakeholders attend regular meetings to inform the design of the MA programme. For example, centre managers have established a Nursery

Education Group for early learning and childcare managers to ensure the programme meets the needs of the authority.

- Trainers and assessors have introduced changes to the planning and delivery of the programme as a result of evaluating feedback. Mid and end-of-unit reviews provide useful evaluations and are effective in providing information to plan for improvement.
- Assessors attend regular standardisation meetings to share effective practice and develop a consistent approach to assessment. Centre staff use external verification reports well to reflect on delivery and plan for improvement.
- Centre staff have developed a useful competency framework for apprentices which is mapped closely to the national occupational standards. Early learning and childcare managers, practitioners and apprentices are using the framework well to reflect on learning.
- Early learning and childcare managers and practitioners speak very enthusiastically about the relationships with assessors and workforce development principal teachers.
- As a result of feedback from apprentices, workforce development principal teachers involved in the induction programme, are currently undertaking assessor training which will help gain a better understanding of evidence gathering and core skills requirements, enabling them to provide additional support to apprentices.

Areas for development

- Assessors are unaware of the placement supervisor role and how these arrangements support apprentices within workplace settings.

4. How good is our management of training delivery?

How well does the centre work with partners to improve outcomes for apprentices?

Areas of positive practice

- The centre has strong strategic links and collaborative arrangements in place with a number of partners including close liaison with Developing Young Workforce (DYW) colleagues. For example, the centre forms part of the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC), a regional collaborative, which meets regularly to discuss early learning and childcare practice. Centre staff benefit from their involvement in practitioner sub-groups to share knowledge and effective practice.
- Centre staff work collaboratively with local authority colleagues to ensure the apprenticeship programmes meets the needs of the settings, including training of staff within settings. For example, mentors benefit from regular training and attend meetings to share practice and experience.
- Centre staff have established good links with Edinburgh College who provide useful work placement experiences for students interested in early learning and childcare career opportunities. The centre supports a college devised programme, entitled Careers in Care, by providing work placement opportunities for full-time students.
- Centre staff provide important professional updating training to all early learning and childcare practitioners within the local authority and these development opportunities are also available to external delivery partners.
- Centre staff engage well with schools within the authority and regularly attend events, such as career fairs and roadshows to promote early learning and childcare

as an attractive career option. Centre staff are supporting school colleagues with the delivery of modules within National 5: Childcare and provide vital current knowledge and understanding which helps improve the course.

Areas for development

- None identified.

Leadership and Quality Culture

5. How good is our strategic leadership?

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

Areas of positive practice

- The centre's vision, entitled "Midlothian, the best place to grow and learn in", is underpinned well by values of equality, empathy, respect, trust and integrity. Staff are highly motivated and committed to delivering a high quality training experience for apprentices which aligns well with vision of the centre.
- Midlothian Council's strategic planning takes good account of the increase in early learning entitlement of 1140 hours per year from August 2020.
- Staff are led well and use the competency framework based on national occupation standards effectively to measure the progress of apprentices against organisational internal performance expectations.
- There is a culture of support across the centre which promotes an ethos of continuous improvement. All staff engage well with practitioners in settings to provide professional update training which helps to foster a culture of quality assurance and enhancement.
- Staff within the centre have developed a useful workforce development framework which is used well to forward plan the expansion of early learning and childcare provision across the local authority.
- The planning and delivery of the MA programme is aligned well to meet the needs of local authority early learning and childcare settings.
- Senior leaders take good account of emerging priorities within early learning and childcare and provide staff with useful updates which are communicated well across the local authority.

Areas for development

- None identified.

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

Areas of positive practice

- Trainers and assessors work closely as a team to improve outcomes for apprentices. This teamwork aligns well with centre's ethos of quality improvement and enhancement.
- Centre training and assessment staff are highly motivated and provide effective support for apprentices during their on-the-job training. The centre is resourced well and apprentices benefit from an extended network of support from mentors, placement supervisors within local authority early learning and childcare settings.
- All assessors track apprentice progress and individual milestone achievements well. They engage pro-actively in action planning and self-assessment activities which helps inform improvement.
- Senior managers engage well with partners to provide assistance for the early learning and childcare expansion programme within the local authority. For example,

delivery staff attend regular meetings with SEIC to share knowledge and expertise and review cross boundary arrangements. Within SEIC, staff engage well in working groups on childminding practice, quality and workforce developments which helps provide important updating for practitioners.

- Senior managers take good account of skills investment planning and other useful labour market intelligence data which helps provide clear strategic direction, particularly in relation to the proposed increase in early learning and childcare provision.

Areas for development

- Apprentices are not clear on how the various staff roles and responsibilities contribute to the delivery of the MA programme.

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

Areas of positive practice

- Overall, apprentices have sufficient opportunities to contribute to the evaluation of the MA programme.
- Informal meeting arrangements with delivery and contract liaison staff are used well to contribute to improvements in programme delivery and outcomes for apprentices.
- Contract liaison staff use regular progress review meetings to ensure apprentices reflect on their performance.

Areas for development

- There is insufficient consultation with training staff to help learners plan next steps in learning and suggest improvements to the programme.

Capacity for Improvement

How good are our internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance our provision and delivery?

Centre staff take good account of local authority priorities and are responding well to the planned expansion of early learning and childcare. The MA programme is linked to local authority policy with an emphasis on children's rights and wellbeing.

Centre managers and assessors support and encourage apprentices well to complete their MA programme. This includes peripatetic placement supervisors and setting based mentors who provide helpful support to apprentices within the workplace. Almost all apprentices make good progress in achieving their goals. However, Apprentices do not formally commence their SVQ activities and assessments until after the initial three induction month period.

Arrangements for quality assurance are effective within the centre and satisfy awarding body requirements. Centre staff have developed detailed handbooks for apprentices, mentors, placement supervisors and managers which are used well within workplace settings. Placement supervisors encourage apprentices to document their experiences in reflective accounts and provide assistance in evaluative writing techniques. However, assessors are missing opportunities to use these reflective accounts to generate unit and core skills evidence.

Apprentices with relevant prior knowledge and experience feel frustrated with the pace of their learning. These apprentices believe they would benefit from an accelerated programme option which recognises and accredits their prior learning to enable quicker qualification progression.

The centre has strong strategic links and collaborative arrangements in place with a number of partners. Centre staff have established good links with Edinburgh College and provide important professional updating training to all early learning and childcare practitioners within the local authority and these development opportunities are also available to external delivery partners.

The centre's vision, entitled "Midlothian, the best place to grow and learn in", is underpinned well by values of equality, empathy, respect, trust and integrity. Staff are highly motivated and committed to delivering a high quality training experience for apprentices which aligns well with vision of the centre. Apprentices are not clear on how the various staff roles and responsibilities contribute to the overall delivery of the programme.

Signposting excellent practice

During the Education Scotland external review, the centre submitted examples of what it considered to be excellent practice and the review team also identified examples worthy of dissemination.

Induction programme (provisional)

Mentoring programme (provisional)

What happens next?

This report will inform the national report.

Andrew J Fogarty
HM Inspector

Further information

For further information about Education Scotland, the external review methodologies, or other information about reviews, see <https://education.gov.scot/>

Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

CLPL	Career Long Professional Learning
DYW	Developing the Young Workforce
ELC	Early Learning and Childcare
FA	Foundation Apprenticeships
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IV	Internal Verifier/Verification
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SEIC	South Eastern Improvement Collaborative
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SSCYP	Social Services (Children and Young People)
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification

Appendix 2

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12			Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9		Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma	Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher			Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3			
2	National 2, Awards			
1	National 1, Awards			