

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Date: 18 April 2023

1.1 Welcome and introduction

Jennifer Coupland welcomed all members to the meeting

1.2 Approval of minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and no further action points to be addressed.

2 General updates

Jennifer Coupland and Karen Riley provided the Alliance with several general updates on events relating apprenticeships and technical education since the previous meeting. She made specific reference to the Prime Minister's announcement regarding the Maths to 18 initiative, adding that IfATE would be supporting the DfE to ensure that the needs of employers were central to any changes made to occupational standards or technical education products.

Other points on which the Quality Alliance was updated included:

- The continued focus on improving achievement rates in apprenticeships,
- DfE work on simplification – with focus on reducing bureaucracy.
- The publication of the simplified draft funding rules; and

The recent announcement on the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) to support alternative routes into higher education such as degree apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications.

3 Thematic discussion – Quality in apprenticeship assessment

The Quality Alliance was given an update on the outcomes of IfATE's recent 'big conversation' initiative; an extensive series of engagements and evidence gathering to better understand the views of employers and other stakeholders about the current skills system. The update covered the background to the work, the key findings of the research and explained that actions and ideas have been separated into four main areas: Quality Offer, Clear & Accessible Information, Working Together and Right Incentives.

Alliance members were then given the opportunity to share thoughts on the extent to which those 'big conversation' themes aligned with the views of their own organisations and to provide further insight into the activities required to deliver a simpler skills system.

In discussion the following key points were made:

- A simpler skills system would require clear information to explain the technical education products available. This information, advice and guidance needed to be available for young people, adults,

parents, carers, schools and anyone who has influence on those making TE decisions. Language would be important and would need to sound exciting and not be limiting.

- If trying to engage employers in the skills system, it would be important to recognise that different types of employers will be at different parts of the learning curve. As a result, different information and language may be needed to support engagement. Such work, alongside the right incentives, would be needed to overcome a culture with employers that investment in training is often perceived as a cost rather than a long-term investment.
- Just as important as having quality products available, would be having a high-quality workforce delivering technical education. The system needed to look at how to ensure the delivery of excellence by investing in teachers, tutors and lecturers and that providers were able to recruit and retain passionate, proud delivery staff. Keeping that workforce knowledge current was vital to develop a sustainable and agile workforce with clear pathways for progression.
- Whilst ensuring that the needs of employers was central to the system, it would be important to ensure the voice of providers was represented effectively into planning and into development and funding decisions. Such provider engagement would also ensure that feasibility and viability of the delivery of products could be factored into decision making.
- It would be important to ensure that as well as addressing the challenges highlighted in the current system in England, such an initiative as the 'big conversation' also looked to consider areas for innovation, international best practice and emerging global trends.
- To generate the currency and standard required for a simpler skills system, consideration needed to be given to how to improve recognition of attainment. Whilst some progress has been made towards an effective credit framework within apprenticeships, more needed to be done to ensure such a system was developed across the whole technical education landscape.

Summing up the discussion, Jennifer Coupland thanked Quality Alliance members for their thoughtful and rich contributions to the discussion. She noted that should members wish to have a further conversation about the findings of the big conversation or how they can become involved in promoting the activities described in the simpler skills system publication, they could get in touch with IfATE.

4 Training Plans (commitment statements)

Following a request for an update at a previous meeting, Quality Alliance members were invited to consider an update on work to strengthen the use of training plans in apprenticeships.

It was explained to Quality Alliance members that training plans, previously known as commitment statements, were developed by providers, and agreed by the learner, employer and provider to confirm what learning must be completed over the course of an apprenticeship. Successful use often related to its continued relevance to the apprentice's individual programme and how often it was being updated. There were, however, improvement needed around overall levels of use and a lack of understanding about purpose.

In discussion Quality Alliance members shared thoughts about how to further strengthen the use of training plans and engagement with the product. Ideas included the possible use of apprenticeship service accounts to interact with learners and 'nudge' them at key points.

5 AOB

Next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Monday 19 June at 10:00am.