

ACT Network Management Policy

Commitment

ACT is committed to procuring new delivery partners that enhance the learning offer of its supply chain/partner network and that are aligned to ACT's strategic aims and those of the Welsh Government.

ACT will develop and maintain excellent relationships with its supply chain/partner network, to ensure the learning offer is diverse, flexible and of the highest standard.

Purpose

This policy sets out ACT's approach to the procurement and management of its supply chain/subcontractor network.

Responsibilities

The Head of Operations & Contracts has overall responsibility for this policy.

Scope

The policy applies to all existing and prospective new subcontracted provision for the delivery of Apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales +

ACT Ltd has subcontracting relationships with the following partner organisations, which constitutes the ACT Network:

- Apprenticeship Group Wales
- Apprenticeship Learning Solutions
- Aspiration Training Wales
- Coleg QS
- Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP)
- Educ8
- HCT (Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training)
- Hen Felin Training (RCT Council)
- Inspire Training
- Llamau
- MPCT
- Newport City Council
- People Plus
- Portal Training
- Progression Training
- Talk Training
- Tydfil Training
- Urdd
- XR Training

Procurement and Due Diligence

Before entering into any contracting arrangement, all delivery partners will undertake a comprehensive due diligence process, which allows ACT Training to review the following areas:

- Financial Standing
- Staffing/Capability
- Policies and Procedures
- Compliance (Health & Safety, Data Protection and Information Security)
- Quality Cycle
- Safeguarding and Prevent
- Performance
- Leadership & Management
- Wellbeing, Care, Support & Guidance

The due diligence information is reviewed by the following ACT staff, before being submitted to the ACT Board for approval:

- Matthew Burnett (Head of Operations & Contracts)
- Rebecca Morris (Head of Continuous Improvement)
- Melanie Mills (Partner Manager)
- Nathan Blackwell (Partner Manager)
- Ian Rowburrey (Partner Manager)
- Robert Haines (Compliance & ICT Manager)

Once approval is given by the ACT Board, a formal contract offer will be made by the Head of Operations & Contracts.

Partner Risk banding

Risk Banding	Description	Types of Intervention
Green	Compliant in all areas/development areas in lower risk areas	Monitoring and support at minimum levels and frequency
Amber	Making significant progress month on month in all areas	Raised levels of support and monitoring with appropriate improvement periods
Red	Non-compliant in high risk areas	Improvement/action plans including timescales to be agreed to decrease risk.

Partner risk ratings will be reviewed and adjusted on a minimum of a quarterly basis, these will factor in the Monthly Performance Panel meeting.

Decline in compliance and progress in one or more of the areas above over a quarterly review period/lack of improvement after intervention will then be referred to the Head of Operations & Contracts and Head of Continuous Improvement.

Initial Training and Support

New providers will be provided with training and/or support in the following mandatory areas:

- Contract Compliance & Funding
- Health & Safety & Information Security Requirements
- Systems – Vision/E-portfolio
- Safeguarding & Prevent
- Quality Cycle including Learner Journey

ACT offers training and support to its supply chain/partners in areas other than those listed; additional training may be provided in the initial stages of the partnership if development areas are identified during the Due Diligence process.

The following support activity will be provided to all new partners, within 6 months of contract start date.

- Support Visit – Data administration, funding and systems (Maytas, eTrack and Vision)
- Contract Management Visit
- Compliance Visit – Audit compliance and process support
- Quality Support Visit (Due Diligence support/action plan)

We also aim to provide the following:

- Ensure that all partners have a shared understanding of the ACT vision and core values and that they are aware of the role they play in helping to achieve these
- Provide partners with the opportunity to share and participate in relevant learning and training opportunities to drive quality improvement across the ACT provision.
- Promote the use of a full range of development opportunities to benefit individuals and business needs.
- Co-ordinate and track all shared Professional development activities across the Network

CPD Entitlement

Contract Value	No of days (based on 2 places per course, pro rata and a flexible basis)
Under £150,000	2 days
£151,000 – £500,000	3 days
£500,000 +	4 days

Please note: ACT reserve the right to amend CPD entitlement where required). Any external/commercial training will be available with a 20% discounted cost.

Learner Contribution and Payments

ACT's standard Learner Contribution deductions range between 10% - 15%, this applies to both Apprenticeship and Jobs Growth Wales+ subcontracting arrangements.

Initial learner contribution deduction percentage will be based on the result of the due diligence processes and the amount of support required (for example, with Essential Skills) and formally agreed with the provider before entering in to a subcontracting arrangement.

Any increase in deduction percentage will be discussed in advance and agreed in writing with the supply chain/partners either at the start of the contracting period, or during the contract year to respond to changing circumstances.

Learner Contribution deductions can be agreed at a lower rate, this is subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Contract funding payments are calculated and reconciled monthly, once the LLWR Inform data is released by the Welsh Government, net payments are paid a month in arrears, on the 24th (or nearest working day). Funding and payment information is accessible to all partners via the Vision management information system.

Support and Quality Assurance

ACT Training has a responsibility to support all its supply chain/partners to sustain high quality provision that meets the needs of learners and exceeds the expectations of stakeholders. The fee charged is used to provide the following support:

- A dedicated Contract Manager and Partner Manager
- Quality Cycle support, including development of individual partner Quality Cycle and Vision for Excellence mapped to Partner SER and QDP
- Good Practice/Working groups
- Compliance audits
- Data Administration processing/support
- Self-Assessment & QDP Report – analysis and support
- On-going Information, Advice and Guidance
- Vision Management Information System
- Maytas system licences (if required)
- Information Security (if required)
- Health & Safety support and guidance
- Safeguarding/Prevent support and guidance
- Staff Training and Development
- ACT Thematic Champions
- Monthly Partner Newsletter

Support Visits

ACT's Partner Managers will carry out support visits with ACT's Supply Chain/partners network on a regular basis, as identified by the Performance Board Review, and Risk Rating. These visits will incorporate a range of areas within the five inspections areas of the Estyn Common Inspection Framework.

Quality Support

- Using Partner Self-Evaluation Report and QDPs, Partner Managers develop an individual Quality Cycle, and 'Vision for Excellence' document per partner. These documents will outline key areas of focus during the contract year, that partner managers will support with through QA activities (for example observations of delivery, sampling of operation processes, etc.) These activities are designed to support partner providers in validating areas of good practice, and/or support continuous improvement.
- Monthly review meetings, where Partner Managers and key contacts will review the outcome of
- To take part in quarterly quality reviews, where discussions will take place including, but not limited to: process towards QDPs and Vision for Excellence; provider performance; case studies/achievements; collaboration and sharing good practice activities; etc.

Please see Annex 1 for overview of process.

Additional Support visits will also be provided to all partners on an on-gong basis:

- Data Administration Support – Annual visit (if required)
- Funding and Contract support – annual visit.
- Systems Support – Annual visit (if required)

Good Practice/Working Groups

ACT provides the opportunities for staff and representatives from the Partner network to meet on a regular basis to share good practice, network, and update knowledge and requirements to drive quality improvement. Areas under review include, but are not limited to;

- Quality management
- Welsh
- Respect
- Skills
- Wellbeing
- Stretch and Challenge
- Ad-hoc groups as required, for example Jobs Growth Wales +, IQA, etc.

External Opportunities as Lead Provider, ACT will communicate and encourage interactions at all opportunities for best practice received from external organisations, including but not limited to

- Welsh Government
- Estyn
- NTfW

Responsibility for communicating external opportunities lies with appropriate Senior Managers both at ACT and within Partner organisations. As the Lead Provider, ACT have appointed champions in all areas under review, as outlined above, who are responsible for the following:

- Organising and facilitating group meetings, which are planned and communicated with sufficient notice
- Ensuring the meetings are purposeful, collaborative and provide the opportunity for all in attendance to contribute and fully participate
- Ensuring they are fully informed of all current news and updates for their areas and to disseminate this information in a timely manner and format
- Contributing, leading and facilitating quality activities including thematic reviews and self-assessment activities to inform individual development plans.

Partners are required to:

- Nominate suitable representatives to attend groups (as above)
- Ensure ACT have the most current representative list
- Ensure representatives from their organisations attend at least 90% of planned groups

Nominated representatives who attend groups are required to have the following:

- A specialist knowledge of the area
- To have a good understanding of the ACT plans to either be responsible or supportive in developing and implementing internal plans for partner organisations. These need to be included and inform quality cycles and activities including self-assessment and quality development plans.
- To be confident and competent to actively and directly contribute to the meetings and any other related activities organised by ACT e.g. thematic reviews, surveys
- To be confident and competent to communicate the information within their own organisations
- To network with other partners
- To identify and report the need for staff CPD
- In order to drive improvements in these areas the representatives will need to be allocated sufficient time and resources to carry out the functions to a suitable standard.

Please note: it is not a requirement to speak Welsh to attend the Welsh group.

Managing Safeguarding Across the ACT Network:

- All Partners must have suitable arrangements in place to manage Safeguarding effectively within their own organisations.
- If a Partner has not got a Safeguarding Policy in place, then they are required to use the ACT Safeguarding policy and guide until their own policy is in place.
- Partners must use the My Concern system to record Safeguarding concerns.
A Concern is any incident or accumulation of incidents that may have an adverse effect on an individual's health and wellbeing. This threshold is far lower than the statutory level but we feel this is important so we can track both safeguarding and welfare.
- The Lead Safeguarding Officer will monitor all concerns raised on the My Concern system.
- The Partner Managers will be Safeguarding trained (Designated Safeguarding Person, DSP) and will support Partners to effectively manage Safeguarding across the Network.
- My Concern system: Partners can either utilise the ACT My Concern system as trusted users, or, acquire their own My Concern system. Partners that chose to acquire their own system must ensure that their Partner Manager and Lead Safeguarding Officer are set up as trusted users.
- The Partner Manager and Lead Safeguarding Officer will support partners to manage safeguarding concerns.

Health & Safety/Information Security

ACT's Compliance & ICT Manager is responsible for Health & Safety across the ACT Network, this is monitored via:

- Health & Safety Review – Structured bi-annual review of all partners' health & safety practices against DfES Code of Practice requirements and legal compliance.
- Information Security – annual audit visit in respect of the ACT Networks Information Security obligations.

Audit

ACT will conduct period audits of partners, checking the following:

- Learner Journey accuracy (Estyn Common Inspection framework)

This audit will be carried out by Partner Managers and the findings recorded and reported to the Head of Continuous Improvement on a monthly basis.

Please note: Providers are required to have their own internal audit cycle as part of Quality Improvement Processes

Contract Reviews

The Head of Operations & Contracts will review and monitor provider performance against contracts on a monthly basis and conduct formal contract reviews as required.

Contract reviews will consider the following areas to place each partner in an appropriate risk banding in accordance with Due Diligence process (Annual and quarterly reviews) and Monthly quality performance information:

- Financial Performance
- Contractual stipulations i.e. non priority %
- Qualification Attainments/Framework Completions
- Timeliness
- Progression Performance
- Quality compliance findings
- Safeguarding/Prevent Duty compliance
- Audit compliance findings

All in year contract variations (increases and decreases) will be subject to approval by the ACT Board of Directors, following review of all relevant information.

Approved contract value changes will be formalised with a signed contract variation detailing the contract value change.

Communication and Storage

This policy will be communicated through Support Meetings, Contract Review.

This will be stored on IRIS HR under Company Information.

Document / Policy Change Request

Any requests to change this policy must be discussed with the Head of Operations & Contracts.

Document / Policy Reviewing and Approving

This strategy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Operations & Contracts and Head of Continuous Improvement.

Annex 1 – Quality cycle/vision for excellence

