



Information, Advice and Guidance Policy

November 2021

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Information, Advice and Guidance Policy and Guidelines

Introduction

The Tess Group is committed to providing excellent information and advice to its learners and employers. This policy stems from our mission of *“To inspire people that in turn inspire others to success”*.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Learning and Development is at the heart of what we do at The Tess Group. We inform, advise or guide learners naturally every day.

We consider our IAG services to be essential in achieving our strategic objectives to ensure that effective quality systems are integral in all parts of the business to meet the needs of learners, employers, employees and the local communities. High quality IAG interventions are what drive performance, success and ultimately achievement and progression; good IAG can raise aspirations and drive ambition. Poor IAG can limit learning, opportunities, value and ultimately result in learners leaving their programme early so it's importance is crucial.

The following policy has been refreshed to help managers and the delivery team to clearly understand how IAG interventions are defined and embedded within the provision. It also aims to highlight some of the good practice processes supported by appropriate policies that can help achieve positive results for learners.

This policy sets the expectation and responsibility of all parties involved, including, but not limited to employees, learners, employers and delivery partners (where applicable).

Definition

IAG is short for describing a range of essential support interventions that enable people to;

- Clarify their starting points in terms of their learning and career
- Identify realistic targets and future goals
- Plan to achieve those goals

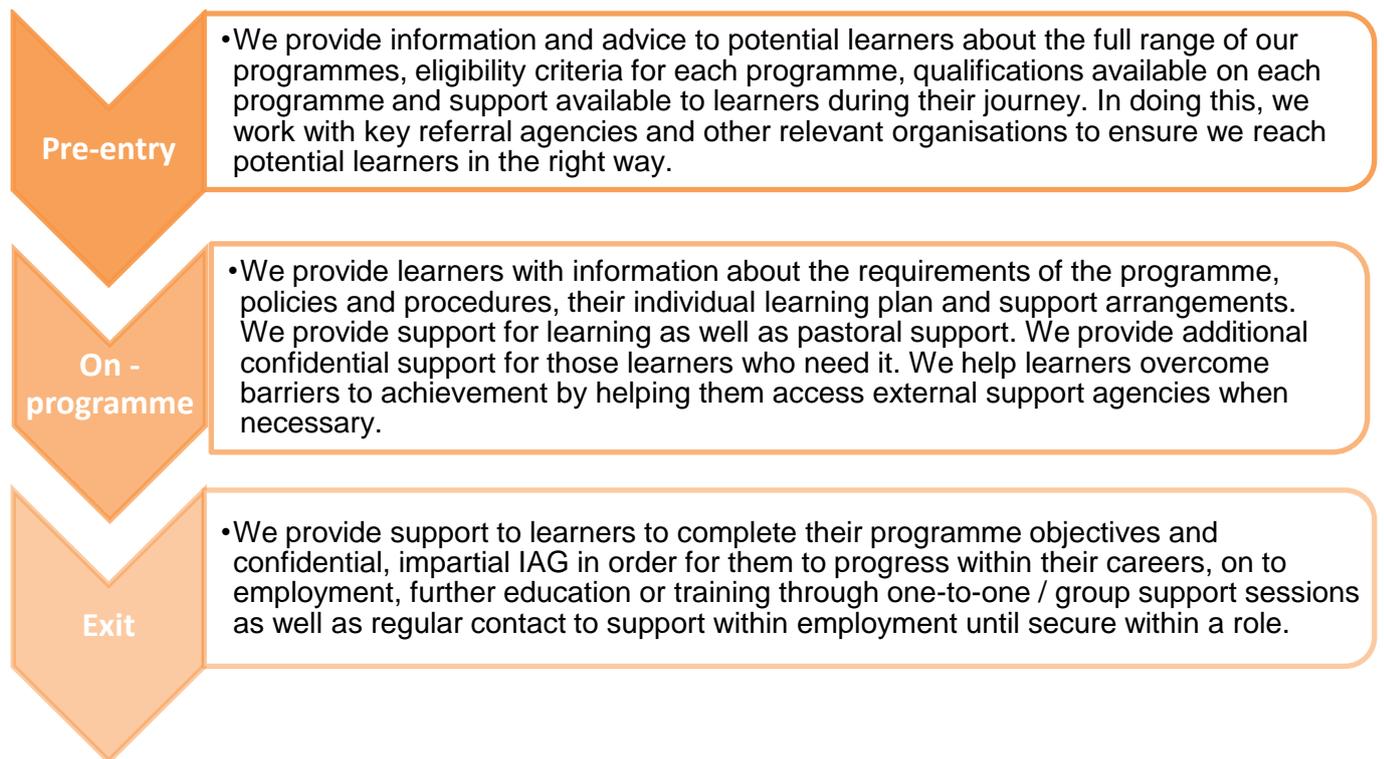
Our commitment

Information provided by us consists of accurate, objective, up to date facts and data about personal and lifestyle issues, learning and career opportunities, progression routes and choices, as well as where to find further help and advice. Information is impartial; provided without any discussion about the relative merits of the options.

Advice given by us is determined by activities that help an individual gather, understand and interpret information and apply it to their own situation. Our advice is directed to assist with the interpretation of information and with meeting needs already clearly understood by the learner and may include signposting or referral to a specialist service or practitioner. Advice may also involve providing practical assistance and learning support.

Guidance provided by us is specialist, impartial support that helps an individual to understand themselves and their needs; confront barriers, resolve conflicts, develop new perspectives and make progress towards their goals.

The IAG Journey



IAG Interventions

Formal IAG will take place at key points in the learning journey; reviewing and discussing learning needs, goals, progress, future plans and support needs. These are planned interventions that generally take place at pre-enrolment, enrolment, progress reviews and exit interviews.

Learners can request IAG at any time / point in their journey either via a formal face-to-face meeting or remotely via email or telephone. Learners requiring specialist help or extended guidance are signposted or referred to suitable alternative provision e.g. other colleagues, National Careers Service, Designated Safeguarding Leads, health, housing, legal, money, relationships, etc.

Signposting and Referral

Signposting or referral will take place when it is clear that another department, provider or agency can offer more appropriate help or support e.g. sector specialisms not offered by us, specialist careers advice, specialist diagnostic assessment, and other forms of learning and / or learning support.

Entitlement to IAG

We offer impartial IAG for individuals who are seeking to improve their skills, qualifications and career prospects. We ensure good quality IAG is built into, and available throughout, our programmes in order to help our learners engage with our services; make the right choices about their learning and work options; access the help and support they need to succeed; enjoy and achieve their programme aims and progress toward their future goals.

Who do we provide IAG to?

Our IAG services are largely focused on, and targeted at, the needs of our learners and employers where we are delivering work-based learning programmes including

Apprenticeships, ESF funded provision and Advance Learner loans. We also offer our services to commercial customers such as our Learning and Development paid for solutions and Safe and Trained paid for Compliance solutions.

How do we provide IAG?

The IAG we offer is embedded within our day to day activities and focuses, in the main, on providing impartial information and advice about the skills-based learning routes we offer and providing practical help and assistance with the completion of learning programmes.

This includes progression opportunities and longer-term career planning; promoting the benefits of and helping learners plan future learning goals and destinations including progression into higher level qualifications or apprenticeship programmes. Progression IAG can be provided at any point in the learner journey; at the initial assessment and enrolment stages and continues throughout the learner journey. Progression IAG is invaluable in planning suitable pathways towards longer-term career aspirations.

Our IAG Aims

- To provide impartial, high quality IAG to learners and potential learners to support effective decisions about the choice of learning programme and achievement of their learning objectives, or to signpost them to alternative options elsewhere as appropriate.
- To ensure that potential learners are given the IAG which enables them to decide correctly whether a programme is appropriate for their circumstances
- To ensure that the people who enrol on a programme choose the right course, leading to a qualification or outcome which is right for their potential and career aspirations
- To ensure that our learners receive sufficient and appropriate IAG during enrolment to prepare a learning / development plan which will lead to successful achievement of their programme objectives
- To ensure that our learners are supported during their programme in a way that enables them to complete with a positive outcome / achievement
- To ensure, that at the end of their programme, learners are supported to remain in employment, find employment if applicable, obtain promotion or enrol on a course of further education or training

To achieve our aims, we:

- Operate within the Matrix standard framework
- Promote the help and support available to all our learners
- Ensure our delivery team have the skills, knowledge and competences to provide effective IAG to learners
- Make sufficient resources available to ensure all potential and actual learners receive the IAG they need
- Build and maintain effective networks and partnerships to support this function

Our IAG process seeks to:

- Ensure potential learners are aware of who we are, the service we offer and how to engage with us
- Promote the benefits of learning and development
- Help learners link their interests, skills and goals to learning opportunities open to them
- Help learners identify and address barriers affecting their participation, achievement and / or progression in learning and work
- Help learners access the (additional) help and support they might need to be successful
- To help develop and maintain the motivation of learners throughout their programme

- To monitor and ensure the health, safety and well-being of learners
- To encourage further learning and development (progression)
- To ensure expectations of services are being met or exceeded

In achieving these aims we expect our IAG activities to have the following impact and benefits:

- Participation on our programmes reflecting regional demographics for sectors we are accredited or have the expertise to deliver
- High retention (90%+) due to learners being placed on the right programme, at the right level and with the appropriate levels of support
- High achievement rates, including timely achievement (85%+ for ESF programmes and 60%+ for Apprenticeships)
- Career progression rates in line with or above contractual requirements
- High levels of satisfaction (85%+) with relevance, accuracy and timeliness of IAG offered to learners and employers
- High levels of satisfaction (85%+) with the availability and timeliness of additional support
- Planned breaks in learner programmes are minimal and identified quickly and effectively
- High levels of satisfaction (85%+) with the quality and availability of resources and equipment

All learners will be provided with:

- Up-to-date information about skills programmes and opportunities available
- An initial discussion to help them explore their needs and circumstances and the options open to them before committing to a programme
- Help to identify and understand their prior learning, skills and experience and match these to suitable qualifications and levels
- A formal enrolment to their chosen programme to include all essential information and learning tools
- On-going practical help and learning support from the delivery team
- Regular reviews of their progress and achievements
- Help accessing additional, specialist help and support from other people or services
- Signposting information relating to a range of career, skills, health, safety and welfare topics
- Help and advice exploring progression routes open to learners on completion of a programme

Our IAG promise ensures that IAG will be:

- Impartial – independent of any vested interests
- Provided in a timely manner by professional, helpful, knowledgeable and suitably qualified staff
- Conducted in an appropriate, comfortable and confidential environment
- Accurate, up-to-date and in a format / media that is accessible for all to understand and use
- Relevant to the needs of learners and employers
- Clearly recorded and documented in key documents and protected under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Inclusive and compliant with our Equality and Diversity policy and associated legislation, including Prevent and in-line with fundamental British values
- Compliant with safeguarding legislation and safer learning principles
- Evaluated and continually improved

Initial IAG – promotion, pre-enrolment and enrolment

This stage of the IAG process is delivered before and at the start of a service. This includes recruitment, enrolment, initial assessment, skill surveys, actions and learning plans. This stage of the IAG process is about engaging the learner and providing good levels of information about the programme the learner is considering and supporting them through the first steps of their journey. In achieving this, we will be able to:

- Attract and recruit the right learners to the right programme with the right level of support
- Identify any factors or barriers that may impact on the learning journey
- Empower learners to make informed and realistic decisions about their learning and work needs
- Personalise and tailor our provision to bring the maximum long-term value to our learners and employers

Information

- Marketing activity and materials
- Detailed description of the services offered
- Information that promotes the value and benefits of learning and work
- Learner / employer friendly versions of relevant policies and procedures including, but not limited to: Handbooks (terms and conditions, grievance and appeals etc.). Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, GDPR, Safeguarding, Prevent
- Clear information on how to access and use resources, equipment and facilities
- Clear information on feedback opportunities
- Copy of Individual Learning Plan / Action Plan

Advice

- Help the learner understand our service and decide if what our offer is what they want and need
- Establish learners' needs, circumstances, aspirations and how these will be met by us
- Identify factors which may have an impact on the learner journey i.e. barriers to learning
- Setting out boundaries of the service and issues of confidentiality
- Check learners fully understand the information that has been provided to them
- Make learners aware of their rights and responsibilities as a learner
- Overcome any concerns about the programme and the mandatory aspects
- Signpost or refer learners to alternative provision (where we are unable to meet an individuals' needs) or where further specialist assessment or in-depth guidance is needed
- Establish links with relevant intermediaries
- Agree a personal development / delivery plan and set SMART targets for the journey

Guidance

- Help learners assess and evaluate their current skills, aptitudes, interests and experience
- Explore a range of options and relate these to learners' own needs and interests
- Support learners to evaluate different options and make sound decisions about their learning and development in relation to long-term career aims
- Plan to achieve long-term career and learning goals

On programme IAG

This stage of the IAG process is delivered during the programme. It covers the point from when a learner has agreed a learning plan and starts to move along the learner journey. In 'learning'

terms this would comprise teaching and learning, assessment / internal verification and progress reviews. This stage of the IAG process aims to help the learner enjoy and achieve their learning goals on programme. This includes providing good levels of information about a learner's progress; helping them access relevant information and resources to enable them to succeed; and keeping them motivated and on-track by overcoming any barriers to success. In achieving this, we will be able to:

- Ensure learners expectations and needs are being met
- Support learners to overcome barriers to success and access any support they may need
- Contribute to learner satisfaction and quality
- Nurture learner retention

<p>Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about progress / distanced travelled / accreditation / achievement • Information about actions or targets agreed in relation to the delivery and completion of services • Information to support inclusion, challenge stereotyping, promote fundamental British Values and promote equality of opportunity • Information about learners' rights and responsibilities • Information to support wider social and welfare needs • Information about any changes / developments to the service • Information to support service / programme delivery e.g. reference materials, hand-outs, useful websites • On-going access to relevant policies and procedures
<p>Advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular 121 meetings giving and receiving feedback on progress, reviewing achievements against agreed targets and encouraging learners to see how they are benefiting • Checking expectations and needs are being met • Helping learners understand and interpret information and relate it to their needs • Helping learners make best use of resources and equipment available and ensuring appropriate adaptations are planned and implemented for learners with a disability or learning difficulty • General learning / practical assistance e.g. portfolio building • An opportunity to discuss in confidence any additional support needs, welfare or social issues / concerns • Referral or signposting to other forms of support i.e. where health or social needs are affecting progress or if the learner decides to leave the programme • Reinforcing boundaries and confidentiality, relevant policies and procedures • Record and agree any changes to the learning plan, agree a way forward to completion
<p>Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered in discrete sessions at fixed points in the learner journey • Help learners develop the knowledge and skills they need to make successful choices, manage transitions in learning and work • Help learners link interests, qualifications and skills to learning and work, evaluate different options and make sound decisions in relation to learning and employment goals • Possible psychometric assessment and aptitude tests • Action planning to achieve medium and long-term career and learning goals

Exit and progression IAG

This stage of the IAG process is delivered towards the end of the programme. It covers the point from when a learner leaves the programme; be it earlier than anticipated or at the agreed completion point. In 'learning' terms it encompasses achievement, exit and progression stages. This stage is about celebrating achievement and encouraging the learner to think about their further development and learning. It is about providing good levels of information about progression routes and providing learners with clear options of how they can progress. This stage will also include ongoing tracking for a period of time beyond the programme whereby opportunities may present to re-engage a learner at the start of the IAG cycle in order to support ongoing career or learning journeys. In achieving this, we will be able to:

- Empower learners by giving them the skills and knowledge to take more responsibility for and manage their learning, career progression and individual life choices
- Improve learners' chances of success by ensuring they receive the support they need
- Facilitate progression into further learning or development

<p>Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on progression routes / choices on completion of programme • Sources of support and how they can be accessed • Details of higher level programmes available to learners now, or in the future • Details of distance travelled / achievements
<p>Advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interview reviewing learner's experience of programme • Recognising and celebrating success • Identifying any unmet needs and any actions available to rectify or meet with them • Support for early leavers including establishing reasons for exiting programme and exploring options or support to continue • Discussing what further options are available that would be beneficial to learners – internally and externally • Signposting learners to other forms of support and help • Agreeing next steps / action planning
<p>Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping learners make successful choices about future learning or work options • Supporting learners to manage transitions into further learning • Exploring any in-work support available • Assisting learners with succession / career planning

Limitations

We are specialists in our own provision and in-house support. Whenever it is appropriate, we will refer learners and potential learners to relevant services and options externally.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Key Performance Indicators of the effectiveness of the IAG services are the rates of retention, achievement, progression and learner satisfaction. These are monitored using our annual Quality Cycle. Evaluation arrangements include:

- Collection of feedback
- Internal documentation audits
- Observations of delivery team carrying out initial interviews with potential learners and employers

- Observations of delivery team carrying out induction processes with learners and employers
- Observations of delivery team carrying out progress reviews with learners and employers
- Observations of delivery team carrying out exit / progression reviews with learners and employers
- Regular analysis of data for retention, achievement, progression
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of IAG and learner support, based on the examination of the evidence from statistics, team observations and feedback. Each evaluation results in an action plan which feeds into our annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and resulting Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP is updated on an ongoing basis.

Equality and Diversity

- Marketing literature, website information and learner and employer handbooks will be presented clearly and simply and illustrated with appropriate images to aid understanding
- Information by phone and face-to-face will be available to accommodate different learning styles
- At any stage, learners can be accompanied to meetings and interviews by a friend, family member or another representative

Supporting Policies and Procedures

IAG interventions should be delivered in conjunction with the following policies and procedures and national standards:

Policies and Procedures

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaint Policy and Procedure
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Information Security Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Policy
- High Quality Standards in Apprenticeships
- Team, Learning and Observation Policy

National Standards

- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)
- The Matrix standard for Information, Advice and Guidance



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