

**BS 76005
Diversity and Inclusion
Commercial in Confidence**



Assessment Report

28th June 2017

Organisation	Alliance Learning
Certificate Number	17/1720
Date of 18 month interaction	November 2018
Duration of 18 month interaction	½ day
Legal Status	Public

Michael Lynch
On behalf of Centre for Assessment Ltd

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Introduction

Alliance Learning, based in Horwich, Bolton, is one of the North West's largest independent training providers and has been delivering Apprenticeships for over 50 years. There are 2 sides to the business: Apprenticeships, commercial courses. Each year, they train approximately 600+ Apprentices on Level 2, 3, 4 and degree level qualifications, as well as over 6000 individuals, who gain vital skills to take back to the workplace. Alliance Learning is a not-for-profit organisation as well as a registered charity and continues to invest in their facilities and staff to ensure the highest quality training. Alliance Learning hold OFSTED grade 2 - 'Good'.

Objectives - include any additional objectives.

The assessment was carried out in order to find evidence as to whether Alliance Learning met the BS760005 standard. No other objectives were agreed

Scope of the assessment - clarify which parts of the organisation are included in the scope

The assessment covered the full operation for Alliance Learning, students and some subcontracting staff.

Executive Summary

Overall impression

It was the Assessor's opinion that having carried out the assessment with due meticulousness that Alliance Learning met the requirements of the BS76005 standard. The Assessor found a lot of strong positive correlation between the verbal, documentary and observed evidence during the assessment. Alliance Learning were clearly focussed on providing the best services for the students through a strong diversity & inclusion approach. Staff that worked for Alliance Learning came across as being firmly committed to the success of the organisation through the provision of effective services (linked to diversity and inclusion) to the many people that came into contact with them.

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Lead Assessor

28th June 2017

Strengths

1. Strong leadership promoting a culture of valuing diversity & inclusion. As referred to in the body of this report, there was no doubting the robust commitment from the top at Alliance Learning in relation to always promoting a strong and inclusive culture. Excellent role models ensured that people were immersed in a culture which was strong in terms of workplace dignity and respect.
2. Safeguarding. The use of the ten point start at the beginning, midterm and end was excellent in terms of ensuring that the learner journey was good.
3. Training and development. As an organisation that has worked with the Investors in People framework over the years, there can be no doubting the commitment to developing staff in line with valuing diversity and inclusion. (i.e. Safeguarding, British Values, advanced equality & diversity, drug and alcohol and risk assessment).
4. Common purpose. Staff interviewed appeared very clear on what the diversity and inclusion agenda was and gave some very cogent evidence on how this affected the working environment.
5. Policies and procedures. Strong and robust policies and procedures built upon a strong commitment to supporting diversity and inclusion. Clear posters and signs around the buildings were further evidence of this.
6. Learner experience. Several positive comments were made by learners in terms of how inclusive, welcoming, supportive and professional that staff were at Alliance Learning.
7. Staff information wallet. This document represented an excellent reference point and was a good aid and reminder of all the key policies at Alliance Learning.
8. Commitment to improve. As a gold IIP organisation, Alliance Learning has proved over the years that it has a commitment to improve in terms of valuing diversity & inclusion and health and well-being for staff.

Impacts of using BS 760005 Framework (3yr assessment only)

Areas for Development

1. Workforce planning. Consideration should be given to examining the current talent management process further in terms of ensuring that there is a clear focus on diversity when recruiting or developing future managers.
2. Risk identification. More work could be done on linking risks to policies in terms of potential non-adherence to policies in terms of latent risks with supply chains, clients, partners and communities.
3. Job swaps. Consideration should be given in terms of how this could enhance a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist for the internal customers.
4. Monitoring, measuring, analysis and evaluation. Although the Assessor was convinced that Alliance Learning had a strong approach in this area, continuous reflection was needed on linking big data to real time evidence in order to gain a more detailed picture.
5. Networking and innovation. Further work could be done with suppliers in terms of examining how suppliers, partners and other organisation view and implement diversity strategies.
6. EDI plan. This was obviously a working document but could be enhanced further by identifying the learning or development achieved from each action or intervention.
7. Learner questionnaire. Consideration needs to be given to reviewing this document in terms of the richness of information that can be provided connected to diversity and inclusion. Perhaps adding a question in relation to learners feeling that they have treated fairly could be useful here.
8. Monitoring and reporting on supply diversity. Although this is informally monitored more work could be done in this area.

Summary of findings against BS 760005

Leadership and commitment (A)

Exemplar, dynamic and proactive leadership ensured that diversity & inclusion was high on the agenda at Alliance Learning and that a strong message permeated through to all staff and students. *'It comes right down from the top'. 'We do have robust policies in place'*. A coherent leadership team was in place with a strong commitment to developing a strong culture of valuing diversity and inclusion at Alliance Learning through all the intercessions with the learners.

Having completed a gold Investors in People assessment with the organisation previously, two of the strengths outlined during that visit were the effectiveness of leadership at Alliance Learning and the high morale of staff.

Staff training was high on the agenda at Alliance Learning and included: Online training, annual refresher training focusing on key themes as identified through staff surveys and a suite of developmental activities linked to diversity and inclusion (i.e. safeguarding, first aid, risk assessment, mental health first aid training, drug & alcohol and advancing equality and diversity course. *'Absolutely they support training'. 'We are supported to do wider training'. 'The safeguarding training helps you to identify issues'. 'The underlying principle in this organisation is equal opportunities'. 'All staff have received safeguarding and prevent training; they have been very good'. 'Some police officers from Greater Manchester Police came to talk to us'*.

People who were interviewed during the assessment indicated to the Assessor that the message from the top in terms of diversity and inclusion was clear and permeated through to all staff. *'We link the topic for discussion linked to British values'. 'We do learner surveys and a lot of suggestions have been put in place'. 'The induction is thorough and we do online training over the year'. 'I am using diversity and inclusion in everything that I do'. 'We have staff meetings, quarterly briefings and annual safeguarding training'. 'The message does get communicated in terms of what staff need to know about EDI'. 'She is a good role model to have'. 'They are very supportive and do promote EDI'. 'They are open to sharing information and that is one of the big things'. 'They treat people with respect and they are approachable'. 'She walks around the rooms and asked are you ok'*.

Senior managers, managers and people within Alliance Learning were extremely enthusiastic in relation to making sure that the delivery of quality outcomes were achieved at all times. They could easily delineate between inanimate outputs and actual affective & effective outcomes and outlined to the Assessor why this differentiation was so important in terms of supporting the diversity and inclusion agenda which had a significant impact on the people that came into contact with Alliance Learning.

On speaking to learners, the Assessor witnessed a strong mutual respect for the tutors and Learning and Development Officers. A recent Ofsted inspection indicated that safeguarding was effective and that apprentices were clear on the safe use of the internet and social media.

Over the years of assessing Alliance Learning, the Assessor had witnessed strong leadership, an upward trajectory in terms of staff morale and a willingness by all staff to be influential in developing the learners at all times.

Understanding and assessing the context of an organisation (B)

Operational plans outline the context in which Equality & Inclusion will be promoted. These were also backed up by strategies, plans and communication, (i.e. marketing strategies and plans – women into engineering, press release and social media involvement).

A robust recruitment approach was designed to ensure that the right person for the job was always selected and that fair and equitable processes ensured that Diversity & Inclusion underpinned the approach (i.e. SIR Data Insight – workforce data service information from personnel, electronic application process, website advertisements and a standard interview approach to ensure fairness of selection).

The ‘Welcome to Alliance Learning’ document represented excellent information to the Learner in terms of equal opportunities, disabled facilities, health & safety at work, emergency procedures, smoking rules, physiological needs, data protection and identification badges.

Within this document there were some clear promises in relation to the service to people who attend Alliance Learning in terms of:

- Whoever you are you are welcome to learn here
- We will treat all fairly
- Learners and staff will respect each other
- Learning and teaching will be done in a style to match your needs
- We will work hard to make sure you enjoy your learning and visit to the centre
- If you need to talk in private, let us know

These promises certainly reinforced the commitment from senior management at Alliance Learning to ensuring that all Learners were included, treated fairly and could develop in a safe environment.

Sharing best practice with other organisations, including membership of GMLPN, GTA, Chamber of Commerce also ensured that Alliance Learning learned from the experiences of others. Contracts between Alliance and supply chain partners reflect an effective approach to diversity and inclusion (i.e. Due diligence and SLA, meetings).

Liaising with the wider communities was completed at Alliance Learning in conjunction with the operational plans (i.e. women into engineering, taster days, school events, community garden, charity work, charity award annually). *‘Last year we had a fiftieth anniversary and we invited everybody’. ‘We had Bolton Muslim Girls School come in’. ‘We have an awards evening which is tomorrow night and we have a parents evening’. ‘We have IAG sessions where we invite the parents in’. ‘We have had the local MP and the Mayor has been in’.*

Significant work had been done on the infrastructure in terms of ensuring that there was good access and the provision of a Multi-Faith room. There has also been a clear focus in terms of offering an eclectic choice of meals in the students’ restaurant.

The capacity planning support role ensured that learners were treated fairly and given the same opportunities. *‘We have all the EDI plans in place which makes inclusion a priority’.*

Establishing HR and workforce policies (C)

Lucid policies were in place (Robust EDI policy and procedures, training (certificates), embedding of British Values with learners as identified through progress reviews and Ofsted reports and an EDI implementation plan).

These informative policies helped the organisation to provide a clear framework with a clear intent in terms of valuing diversity and inclusion and these helped to form the actual workplace culture at Alliance Learning.

Senior management at Alliance Learning always endeavoured to ensure that these policies and procedures were 'lived in', were instrumental in supporting people and also represented clear expectations for all staff and Learners.

The 10 point star approach was also good evidence of Alliance Learning wanting to gain a deeper understanding of their Learners. This was done on the sign up process and made sure that if there were any issues they could be dealt with expeditiously. Monitoring the apprentices' journey was seen by members of staff at Alliance Learning as influential in ensuring that Learners were always supported to learn effectively and that there was a very inclusive approach at all times.

The apprentice screening process ensured that the most appropriate person was matched to the company that they were going to work with. (Skills/will). Individual learning plans (ILP) were proactively used to assist the learner to move forward with the ongoing assistance from their Learning and Development Officer. Learner reviews were completed every eight weeks at Alliance Learning and as part of this process, certain topics were discussed with the Learners, (i.e. British values, equality and diversity, health and safety and safeguarding)

During the assessment staff confirmed to the Assessor that they had very good HR support and that when policies were changed the updates were well communicated to them. Comments made by staff during the assessment included. *'We get an update when policies have been changed and any training required'. 'It is throughout everything; we have training, British values, reviews, standardisation meetings and monthly group meetings'. 'HR constantly sends emails when things have been updated which is great'. 'Things are always changing so we have to maintain our polices'. 'The learners have access to the safeguarding officers which is important.*

The staff handbook is available electronically and policies are accessible when updated. The staff information wallet was excellent and covered the following areas.

- British Values
- 9 protective characteristics
- PREVENT duty
- Safeguarding reporting and officers
- E & D
- Professional standards and channel awareness
- What Learners can expect from Alliance Learning and what was expected from employers
- Key performance indicators

Relationships with customers, clients, supply chain partners and communities (D, E & F)

Regular meetings, reviews (SAF) and proactive managers at Alliance Learning made sure that staff at all levels were communicated to effectively. The use of Safeguarding procedures, Learner charters, British Values, diversity calendar and weekly emails from OTLA co-ordinator ensured that both staff and Learners were fully aware of the expectations.

These approaches were further backed up at Alliance Learning by regular updates and one to ones, mandatory CPD, staff & Learner induction processes, 'challenge on protected characteristics', use of British Values and effective communication through the excellent staff wallet (Please see areas of strength 7).

Staff indicated that managers at Alliance Learning were supportive of their needs and that diversity and inclusion was a key focus within the business. *'I have some diverse classes'. Managers are seen as helpful and supportive. 'He does treat everyone as an equal'. 'If you have any problems or learners have a problem you can have a chat'. 'We very much value diversity and inclusion and it is what we do at all times here'.*

As referred to earlier in this report, regular community interactions within the local area were used by Alliance Learning and these included, visits to schools, open days, charity days and the community garden initiative.

Learning and Development Officers worked very closely with Learners to ensuring that diversity and inclusion was very much integrated within assessment and feedback processes. Adapting the learning environment and Learner journey appeared key to all staff that worked at Alliance Learning. *'We look for what is most appropriate to the learner'.*

Coordinated relationships existed with suppliers and partners and this included, regular meetings, joint training and policy updates. These arrangements were confirmed as being effective. *'Alliance Learning are excellent at sharing good practice'.*

Learners spoken to during the assessment were effervescent in their praise for the involvement, support and guidance provided by staff at Alliance Learning. The Learners confirmed that members of staff at Alliance Learning were extremely interested in their ongoing development, well-being and safety at all times.

Comments made by the Learners interviewed during the assessment at Alliance Learning included: *'The training that they provide is useful in relation to what we are going to do in life' 'They will always explain things and if you are not happy with anything they will help you'. 'They do help you and will visit you if you have a problem'. 'They do come out to work to help you'. 'Our LDO come out once a month and they go out their ways to help you'. 'They talk about British Values in your reviews'. 'The reviews are excellent and keep you up to date'. 'They keep you informed of your progress'. 'The British values are an eye opener in a sense'. 'They went over the diversity and inclusion very well during the induction and it was an opportunity to show my understanding of what has been going on in the world'.*

Exploring further potential, monitoring, measurement, analysis, evaluation, continual improvement and legislation. (G & H)

Alliance Learning as a training provider was always keen to ensure that the organisation was moving forward through continuous improvement. A recent pilot of GM travel offer for apprentices to allow them to access learning or work, EDI plan, attendance on CPD webinars, (such as autism awareness) and Mental Health First Aid training were used to explore potential for continuous improvement. The evidence in terms of the pilot in relation to the GM travel offer for apprentices to allow them to access learning or work was starting to bear fruit and was supporting the Learners overall good experience. The sign up process had been streamlined and now represented a good platform on which to understand the Learners and be consistent in the approach at all times.

Staff at Alliance Learning were fully committed to supporting continuous improvement and made the following comments to the Assessor. *'I know we have the EDI plan which is updated on a regular basis'. 'They have introduced the travel scheme for learners which is good'. 'From day one we have always tried to improve'. 'This now seems natural where all things are in place. 'It has changed a lot and I would like to think we have gone more modern'. Standardisation meetings were used to ensure that consistency was achieved and that members of staff approached diversity and inclusion effectively. Staff again confirmed this. 'We need consistency for staff and consistently for the learner'. 'I would be concerned in people didn't have the confidence to challenge and they have a lot of responsibility in their role to challenge things'. 'We do get information from the Self Assessment report'. 'Ofsted raise the bar and we always aspire to raising standards as we want the best for our learners'. Legislation in respect of the Equality Act 2010 was clear and published throughout the building at Alliance Learning. The nine protected characteristics were included in the staff wallet and also in the Learner information.*

Learner reviews and promotion of personal development, behaviour and welfare, reviewing EDI plan. Management meetings, regular learner and employer surveys and annual staff surveys ensured that Alliance Learning approach to E & I was monitored effectively. One to ones, appraisals, measuring against EDI implementation plan, safeguarding meetings monthly and including board members quarterly.

Two European Social Fund contracts are held by Alliance Learning which need to be outcomes in terms of ensuring that clients complete the courses and get the qualifications, progression, and links to risk of redundancy. This was monitored by KIT with candidates, 28 days progression outcome monitoring and 3 month tracking in terms of redundancy. The organisation was still looking for other funding streams and again these are monitored through, diversity and inclusion, priority sectors (i.e. parents carers), analysing impact on disadvantaged groups, traineeships (NEETS), engaging more females into engineering and taster days for Minority Ethnic Groups

'There is definitely more diversity in terms of our learners and it is changing for the better'. 'The induction process has changed dramatically'. 'It is just embedded throughout the company everyone takes it on board'. 'We are always striving for new ways of promoting things and we want to embed things in the company and with the learning'. 'The induction is a massive part of what people do with us and it has been developed significantly'.

Disability health questionnaire has been developed over the past couple of years and was aimed at assessing if people need reasonable adjustments. Adaptations, parking, sending message that Alliance values diversity and informing managers for continuous support potential.

Conclusion

Assessment

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by the Centre for Assessment Ltd the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that Alliance Learning meets the requirements of BS 76005. The Assessor recommends to the Panel that Alliance Learning be recognised under the standard. On behalf of Centre for Assessment Ltd. the assessor would like to congratulate all the staff of Alliance Learning on their achievement.

Overall Scoring

Overall Rating	Not met	Standard	Good	Excellent

Key

Rating	Interpretation
2 Not Met	<i>Significant work needed to meet the standard</i>
1 Not met and 1 standard	<i>Some work to do to meet the standard</i>
2 Standard	<i>Standard met</i>
1 Standard and 1 Good	<i>Some evidence of best practice found</i>
2 Good	<i>Consistent evidence of best practice found</i>
1 Good and 1 Excellent	<i>Some evidence of exemplar practice found</i>
2 Excellent	<i>Consistent and embedded evidence of exemplar practice found</i>

Assessor Name: Michael Lynch

Date of report: 3rd July 2017