

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Policy

1. Background

Intech Centre is committed to providing a high-quality level of service to all its learners. This document seeks to provide clear guidelines to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners within the organisation, with reference to best practice and strategies used to measure IAG in accordance with the *matrix* quality standard.

2. Definition of IAG

IAG is a term which encompasses a broad range of activities and interventions which enable learners, currently out of work, to overcome barriers to learning and entering employment. The service facilitates access to accurate, objective and up-to-date information with regard to the labour market and other support and provision available. The service also provides a valuable support framework for learners currently in work as they progress through their course. IAG refers to all information, advice and guidance sessions provided to learners, from initial assessment, through informal progression meetings and formal learner progress reviews, to end of course reviews. The IAG service should be:

- **Impartial:** We will not just look at learning programmes delivered by Intech Centre. We will help Learners look at what other providers are offering. They will be told how to find out more – perhaps given a phone number or website address.
- **Confidential:** Nothing from the discussion will be shared with anyone else without the Learner's knowledge or permission.
- **Fair:** Clients will be treated fairly and equally, in line with Intech Centre's Training Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- **Transparent:** Learners will be told what will happen. If, at any time, learners do not understand what is going on, they will be encouraged to ask their tutor/assessor to explain.

3. IAG service as part of organisational goals

The aim of effective IAG is to promote the benefits of learning, help individuals to address and overcome any barriers to learning and support them in making realistic and well-informed choices.

This will be measured against the following critical success measures:

- Enrolment – 99% of Learners are enrolled on the correct course first time. This will be achieved through good IAG to both Learners directly, and their employers in advance of courses commencing.
- Retention – At least 90% of Learners will complete their courses.
- Success/Achievement – At minimum rate of 90% achievement rate.
- Learner satisfaction – At least 95% of Learners to rate Intech Centre as excellent or very good for the quality of the Information, Advice, and Guidance that they have received. This will largely be evaluated through Learner Feedback forms.
- Availability – Ensure that marketing, promotional and information materials are comprehensive, accessible and available in a range of formats.
- Review – Monitor the effectiveness and improve the quality of IAG via Customer feedback; staff feedback; employer feedback; funding partner feedback; analysis of Initial Learner Profiles; ILPs, career aspirations and Learner Progress Reviews; analysis of outcomes for learners; annual review, renewal & update of information materials.

4. Outcomes of the IAG service

Through receiving IAG, Intech Centre learners will be able to:

- Identify their existing skills and experience.
- Receive clear, accurate, up to date, accessible, objective and impartial information before committing to a course.
- Access clear, accurate, up-to-date, accessible, objective and impartial IAG about progression opportunities.
- Identify their personal barriers to entering training and employment and develop a support plan to overcome them.
- Be confident that staff have been appropriately trained and developed to deliver IAG that meets the matrix Standard.
- Be signposted or referred speedily for specialist or alternative help, either within or beyond the Intech Centre.
- Increase their awareness of employment and career progression opportunities open to those learners already in employment.
- Gain clear expectations of the limitations of the services available at Intech Centre; and
- Increase their awareness of their options and be better equipped to make positive career choices, or identify potential career progression opportunities that are right for them.

5. Best practice

This section outlines principles of best practice that will be adhered to across Intech Centre centres. It is recognised that each site and each learner is different and it is therefore appropriate to tailor the nature of care, guidance and support accordingly. However, the principles outlined in this section will be adhered to across sites to ensure consistency in quality.

5.1 Promoting the IAG service

The Intech Centre IAG service is promoted primarily through face-to-face or telephone discussions, the Learner Handbook, in-centre notices, teaching sessions, and the web site. In promoting the service, the following principles will be adhered to:

- Information about the service will be clear, so that learners and employees know what they can expect from the service and what the limitations are
- Clear roles and responsibilities will be outlined
- The benefits of IAG will be highlighted (see Outcomes of IAG in section 4); and
- Promotional materials will take account of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

5.2 At the start and during an IAG session

Naturally, the first time a learner receives an IAG session, more background information about the service will need to be covered than in subsequent sessions. However in any one-to-one meeting, the following principles will guide the session:

- The one-to-one session should be held within an environment where the learner feels comfortable enough to express issues or concerns
- Agree the purpose and parameters of the session
- Clarify what the learner's requirements are and be clear on what they can expect from Intech Centre.
- The session should have a clear structure
- Review progress against targets from previous sessions (if applicable)
- Explore and evaluate barriers or support needs and options for overcoming/ addressing them
- Prioritise issues so that those of higher priority can be focused on and dealt with; and

- Keep records of discussions during the session, completing relevant paperwork.

In an initial IAG meeting the following will also need to be covered:

- Key policies and procedures that are relevant to the learner (Health and Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Safeguarding, Confidentiality, etc.)
- Initial expectations of the service and course, including learner, employer, Intech Centre expectations; and
- An assessment of the commitment to training.

5.3 Ending an IAG session

When ending an IAG meeting, the following principles are important to ensure learners are clear that the aims of the session have been met:

- Set new goals to be reviewed at next sessions (if applicable)
- If this is a final IAG session, elicit the learner's feedback; and
- At the end of the meeting, summarise everything discussed and check that the learner has understood everything; where necessary, a date for the next meeting should be agreed.

5.4 Interaction with learners

In your interactions with learners, the following principles are important:

- Be welcoming, positive, enthusiastic and encouraging
- Build rapport and trust through the way you interact
- Ensure you communicate clearly; this is particularly vital in managing expectations or where learners have English as an additional language
- Allow the learner to tell their story and talk about their expectations, practicing good listening skills; and
- Respond with respect and encouragement, even if you do not agree with the learner's viewpoint.

5.5 Supporting learner decision-making

As much as possible, involve your learner in all decision-making and remember that you are there to support the decision-making process; it is the learner who has to make the decision. This can best be achieved through:

- Having sufficient knowledge about your learner and their background
- Ensuring the information you give to learners is relevant, accurate and up to date (see section 5.6 below) to enable them to make an informed decision
- Giving structured, realistic, clear guidance with timescales
- Taking personal constraints into account and reviewing the options
- Explaining the benefits of each decision or choice, remaining impartial; and
- Throughout the programme re-visiting the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to support on-going decision-making.

5.6 Information and resources given to learners

The information and resources given to learners to support their decision-making, includes verbal information, internal and external websites, leaflets, course information, staffing information (for instance the Safeguarding Designated Person), employer feedback, progression routes, local council and sector skills data, case studies of other learners and information on the support services learners can access. All information given must be:

- Relevant
- Accurate

- Up to date
- Impartial; and
- Mindful of managing learner expectations.

5.7 Confidentiality

The content of IAG sessions will be kept confidential, unless a safeguarding issue is raised. The learner should be made aware of this at the start of each session. Learner records will be kept in a secure place (i.e. a locked cupboard or secure part of server) to ensure information security.

5.8 Referrals

Staff and learners should be aware of the limitations of their role and of what Intech Centre can deliver. Where a learner requests support or a service outside of what the IAG worker or the organisation is able to offer, the learner will be signposted or referred internally or externally in the following way:

- Where another member of staff is better equipped to deal with a particular query or need, the learner will be signposted to the relevant staff member within the organisation (i.e. Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)
- Where another agency is better equipped to deal with a particular query or need, the learner will be signposted to the appropriate agency, using an established network of providers that will be updated regularly; and
- The effectiveness of referrals will be reviewed in IAG sessions with the learner.

5.9 Follow up

It is important to follow up after an IAG session, particularly when actions or additional support have been agreed. During the transition into employment, or for those learners already in employment, adapting to the demands of the course in conjunction with holding down a full-time job, or during a change in circumstances, it is also key to maintain regular contact with learners to better support them. This may be done in one, or more, of the following ways, depending on the situation:

- Learner progress reviews carried out every 10 weeks to review and set new SMART targets, in addition to reviewing additional support, referrals and interventions (where relevant) with learners
- Tutorials or drop-in support sessions
- Informal contact through Facebook/ Twitter/ text/ email, mindful of not writing sensitive information and maintaining professional boundaries; and
- Involving parents / guardians or employers, or external agencies in follow up support, depending on the nature of the circumstances.

5.10 Observations and Feedback

Staff involved in delivering IAG will be observed periodically to measure the standard of IAG and whether this meets the *Matrix* quality standard. The information gathered from observations will be recorded on the *Observation Form* and analysed by the relevant Centre's Quality Assurance Officer and Intech Centre's Senior Manager through the Moderation process. Information will be used to assess what action needs to be taken to improve the standard of IAG; where necessary, staff may be required to undertake further training to help improve the service.

Feedback and advice will be given to staff members at the end of the observation. Staff will also be able to read through observation notes and ask questions.

Learner feedback will also be collected and recorded on the *Observation Form* and reviewed by the Centre's Quality Assurance Officer, Intech Centre's Senior Manager.

Please note: learner feedback gathered as part of observations will remain confidential and other staff being observed will not be permitted to view or access this section of the *Observation Form*.

All observations will be conducted by the relevant trained Observer. The trained Observers will also be responsible for doing peer observations on one another; information gathered will be reviewed by the Centre's Quality Assurance Officer and Intech Centre's Senior Manager through the Moderation process. At the end of each wave of staff observations, development trends will be analysed and areas for improvement identified to inform staff training. Good practice will be identified and cascaded across the consortium.