

ESFA Provider Network Strategy Launch

Since the pandemic, like many organisations, we have had to re-align the way in which we work, including developing new relationships and refocussing on key priorities.

We value the role that providers play in the apprenticeship and wider skills system and the ESFA Apprenticeship Directorate is keen to bring its relationship closer to its Provider Networks via its Chairs across England.

A number of existing, trusted and strong relationships already exists – namely in the South West and North East and we now need to roll this approach out consistently, at scale and at pace.

We see this as a positive partnership and trust that you will welcome the move to work more closely to represent government priorities, identify and help address the challenges faced by the Provider Network and its stakeholders; so that together we may build a better future for our learners to improve quality outcomes.

I should make it clear, that this new model does not replace or displace existing contractual relationships with your ESFA Territorial Managers or existing communications, but is focussed on keeping you informed of key changes.

Over recent months you will have benefitted from communications from our central communications channel, keeping you informed of the latest policy guidance. We now want to enhance these communications through collaborative working between you and the four Skills Development Managers working across England:

- Victoria Dixon - North Victoria.Dixon@education.gov.uk
- Boyd Hatwood - South Boyd.Hatwood@education.gov.uk
- Ian Higginbottom - London Ian.Higginbottom@education.gov.uk
- Dena Read - Central Dena.Read@education.gov.uk

Boyd Hatwood will be your primary contact and they will be in touch with you over the coming weeks to arrange an initial conversation. However, as we work as a team, you may from time to time, be contacted by any one of the colleagues named above.

The ESFA commits to:

- Having a touch-point call with the network Chairs on a 6-weekly basis (minimum) or attend a network meeting with your members (whichever comes first in the 6-weekly cycle)
- Provide webinars to networks in line with ESFA communications plans on key announcements.
- Feed all insight gathered at meetings into ESFA internal resolution channels. This is an opportunity for networks to influence future policy, be consulted on, and fix key programme areas.

- Routinely present common key issues to a newly established Provider Network Insight Forum. The board is comprised of senior ESFA product owners from across the agency.
- Feedback will be provided to network Chairs via your nominated ESFA lead.

In return we ask that you support us by:

- Communicating DfE/ESFA strategic objectives to your network. Ultimately encouraging members to grow the apprenticeships programme by:
 - Improving apprenticeship quality and outcomes
 - Increasing 16–18-year-olds starts
 - Improving the number of starts from SME organisations.
- Collecting high-quality market intelligence from your members and share this with us.
- Resharing DfE/ESFA communications as appropriate to your members.
- Inviting colleagues to present at Provider Network Meetings in line with ESFA communications plans.

We look forward to building a close and mutually beneficial relationship over the coming months. Boyd will be in touch with you in the next few weeks.



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