

Quality Assurance Assessment 2023-24

Provider Name: GTG Training Limited

Visit Dates: 20 – 23 November 2023

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Executive Summary, Provider Grades and Overall Conclusion

This visit was based upon Skills Development Scotland's formal review process which is set out in our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework¹ document. This report identifies the main findings of the review team from their visit. It sets out areas for improvement which the provider should place within its Quality Action Plan.

Introduction

The number of achievements as a proportion of all leavers for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland was 72.7% in 2022/23, 0.9pp higher than 2021/22. The achievement rate gradually declined from 2016/17 to 2021/22, following a similar trend reported in Further Education performance figures, but is starting to show signs of recovery post-pandemic.

This report, and in particular the areas for improvement identified, need to be considered in this context, and we acknowledge that many of the circumstances which may have impacted the providers ability to effectively deliver training were out with their control.

We have reviewed key performance indicators in line with the provider's particular portfolio of provision and caveated statements regarding outcomes in relation to the effects of the pandemic.

The report has been graded giving proportionate consideration to how the provider has adapted to the particular circumstances that have affected them to deliver their work-based learning provision.

Standard	Quality Standard Grade
Service Delivery	Excellent
Leadership and Quality Culture	Excellent
Outcomes and Impact	Excellent

N.B. –

- The definitions for the grades awarded in relation to the Quality Standards, and a table detailing the quantifying statements / proportions used throughout the report are detailed in [Appendix 1](#)

¹ [SDS Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework 2023-24](#)

GTG is a well-established training provider with a strong track record in delivering high quality training to meet the needs of employers and apprentices. This assessment visit identified several areas of effective practice, and these are outlined in the relevant sections below.

GTG place a strong emphasis on the needs of the individual, carrying out a thorough initial assessment process to ensure candidates are matched to a training programme and qualification that gives them the best chance of success and meets the needs of the employer. Structured and effective induction processes provide apprentices with the information they need to successfully commence their training. Throughout the apprentice's learning journey, training is tailored to meet individual needs and support successful progression and completion of the programme. This responsive approach is reflected in the provider's strong achievement rates.

Long-standing, positive relationships with employers are used to very good effect to enable GTG to understand business requirements and sector developments and determine how training can be adapted in response to these. There is a clear understanding of the value of including employers in the design and delivery of apprenticeship training, and the positive impact this has on successful outcomes for apprentices. Valuable collaborative approaches are evident, with well-planned and effective training schedules providing apprentices with appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills and progress their career goals.

Apprentices have access to, and make good use of, a wide range of very high-quality resources which support them very effectively to develop confidence and competence and successfully complete their qualification. The provider was already aware of feedback from apprentices in relation to college resources and has taken steps to address this with the sub-contractor. Plans are in place to ensure that all apprentices can access the same quality of resources going forward. Processes for managing sub-contractor delivery are well-defined and effective and sub-contractor performance is appropriately monitored for quality of delivery and achievement of results.

GTG has a motivated and committed staff team who work extremely well together to provide a quality service for apprentices and employers alike. Senior staff provide clear strategic direction and strong leadership, and delivery staff feel very well supported in their roles. Communication routes are well-developed and very effective, and staff appreciate the many opportunities that are offered to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff are all very experienced in their roles and make excellent use of the wide range of training modules available to them. This commitment to ongoing professional development has a positive impact on training delivery with apprentices commenting on the excellent level of support which assessors and other staff provide.

GTG demonstrate a strong commitment to quality and continuous improvement with dedicated quality staff roles in the organisational structure and systematic and effective processes deployed to monitor and improve the quality of training provision. All delivery staff are involved in, and understand, the value of quality assurance activities and play an active part in ensuring quality standards are met and opportunities for improvement are identified and progressed.

As a well-established training organisation with a wide network of partners in the sectors in which they operate, GTG makes very effective use of labour market intelligence to understand current and future demand for training. They demonstrate clearly how they have adapted to the changing needs of customers and how they focus on the future as they embrace the challenges of sustainability and digitalisation. Strategic plans are appropriately reflected in day-to-day delivery of training, for example recycling in the training centres supporting the Carbon Reduction Plan.

The pandemic had a clear impact on training delivery and GTG took immediate steps to adapt their delivery models and further embrace digital tools to support delivery. Innovation and change is a key strategic driver for the organisation and development of training is very well-planned to incorporate new areas that will support continuous improvement of the provision they offer. While training has now returned to face-to-face delivery, digital resources such as e-portfolio continue to be embraced, enhancing apprentice and employer options.

GTG's performance demonstrates a positive trend, exceeding the SDS benchmark in the last contracting year. Robust procedures are in place to track apprentice progress, monitor achievement and take steps to mitigate where an apprentice falls behind anticipated goals. Systematic analysis of results ensures that GTG understand how they are performing against benchmarks, and how framework achievements compare to national figures. Close analysis of equality and diversity data enables targeted marketing of under-represented groups, and this is used to good effect to realise improvements.

Feedback from apprentices and employers was overwhelmingly positive with GTG being the "training provider of choice" for many employers who return year after year. There is clear evidence that GTG analyse stakeholder feedback and use it to drive improvements. Apprentices appreciate that their views are valued, and they spoke very highly of the staff team and their overall experience on the programme.

One employer is seeking additional information be included in progress review forms to further support them plan apprentice workplace tasks. It should be noted that this was a relatively new employer and overall, they are very satisfied with the quality of training delivery. This feedback is included as an area for improvement to enable the provider to consider additional enhancements to their delivery model.

Provider Description

The Glasgow Training Group was established in 1971 to provide training for motor trade occupations in the Greater Glasgow area. Purchased by Arnold Clark Automobiles Limited in 2003, the company became known as GTG Training Limited has since grown to provide a wide range of training services to both local and national employers with dedicated training centres in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Wolverhampton. In addition to delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme, which they have offered for many years, GTG also offer a wide range of courses on a commercial basis.

Modern Apprenticeship training in Scotland is delivered from the provider's centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Kilbirnie Street centre in Glasgow is dedicated to HGV, bus and coach training. A new facility in the South Street location is dedicated to electric and hybrid vehicle training and a separate workshop offers electronic security system training. The Glasgow and Edinburgh locations also provide a range of fully equipped meeting rooms, classrooms and conference facilities.

GTG recruit and train apprentices for the Arnold Clark Group (the parent company) as well as offering training provider services to external employers. They offer apprenticeship training in a range of occupational sectors including automotive, transport and logistics, information technology and business skills. Most apprentices are in the automotive and transport and logistics sectors. Recruitment to the programme is carried out throughout the year to meet employer demand.

Overall responsibility for delivery of National Training Programmes lies with the Operations Director. They are supported by the Group Head of Quality; Quality Systems Manager; Operations Manager; Funding Manager; departmental managers and a team of trainers and assessors. Sales and business development staff support delivery through their work with employers. FIPS administration is carried out by the Administration Team based in Glasgow.

Depending on the framework being studied, some apprentices undertake off the job training at a GTG training centre. Where an apprentice lives beyond daily commuting distance of the centre, hotel accommodation is arranged by GTG for the duration of the training block.

While most of the training and assessment is completed in house, GTG sub-contract some elements of delivery to sub-contractor organisations and contract agreements are in place. Some automotive delivery, depending on geography, is sub-contracted to Scottish Motor Trade Association (SMTA) with off the job training in local colleges.

GTG is a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) accredited driving test centre. DVSA examiners come to the training centre to carry out HGV driving tests.

There were 1533 apprentices in training as at 1st September 2023 undertaking the following frameworks:

MA Framework	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level	Awarding Body	Nos in Training as at 1st September 2023
Automotive	Level 5	Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI)	13
Automotive	Level 6	IMI	186
Automotive	Level 7	IMI	643
Bus and Coach Engineering and Maintenance	Level 6	IMI	76

Business and Administration	Level 6	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)	2
Construction: Civil Engineering	Level 5	SQA	45
Construction: Technical	Level 7	SQA	13
Customer Service	Level 5	SQA	19
Customer Service	Level 6	SQA	5
Digital Applications	Level 6	SQA	42
Electronic Security Systems	Level 6	SQA	35
Freight Logistics	Level 5	SQA	22
Freight Logistics	Level 6	SQA	393
Freight Logistics	Level 7	SQA	3
IT & Telecommunications	Level 6	SQA	3
Land Based Engineering	Level 6	SQA	14
Management	Level 7	SQA	16
Retail	Level 6	SQA	3

Where not previously achieved, one or more core skills elements are separately certificated in accordance with framework requirements, other elements being fully embedded into the qualification units.

Internal verification of qualifications is carried out in line with the provider's internal verification policy where they deliver that qualification. Sub-contractors carry out their own internal verification for the qualifications they deliver.

Visit Approach and Team Details

GTG's National Training Programme delivery was previously formally assessed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in September 2018. The provider submitted their annual self-assessment in April 2023 and evidence has been considered in accordance with this along with additional supporting evidence presented during the visit.

The assessment team had four members, a quality assessor and three associate assessors.

The provider was extremely well organised for the visit. A comprehensive selection of supporting evidence was provided in advance of the review via a dedicated online SharePoint folder which the provider had set up specifically for the review. Documents were helpfully grouped into sub-folders by subject. Arrangements for staff, sub-contractor, apprentice, and employer interviews were facilitated very well by the provider, with reminders sent to all interviewees in advance of their meeting. This was helpful and ensured scheduled interviews took place at the planned time. The visit team was made very welcome and the provider's support throughout the visit was much appreciated.

The visit was carried out remotely using MS Teams and mobile phone calls which worked well. Interviews were selected in accordance with the sampling strategy and included apprentices undertaking different frameworks, different levels of qualification, apprentices of different ages, apprentices with different employers and at different stages of their training.

The assessment team interviewed six members of staff, two sub-contractors, 19 apprentices and 10 employers. One further apprentice interview was planned but they

were unavailable on the day due to unexpected absence. The assessment team also considered sampling that had been completed by the Skills Investment Advisor in the previous six months. In total, feedback from 23 apprentices and 13 employers was considered in this review. Two observations were carried out during the review; one of an apprentice progress review meeting and one of a new apprentice induction.

The provider arranged a virtual tour of their Glasgow facilities, including the electric/hybrid vehicle training area and the dedicated electronic security systems workshop. The quality assessor was able to view the live training environment, and a range of workshop resources as well as canteen and breakout areas.

Together, the supporting evidence documents, interviews, observations, and virtual tour offered opportunities to gather information from a wide range of sources.

GTG are contracted to deliver Foundation Apprenticeships as well as Modern Apprenticeships. The quality assessment, and this report, relate only to the delivery of Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Service Delivery

Strengths – These are the things that are working well for the provider

- GTG has very effective processes in place to assess candidates' suitability for the programme, explore motivation for their chosen learning pathway and confirm they have good prospects of successfully achieving their qualification. Initial assessment activity is tailored to individual frameworks, e.g., for automotive, candidates complete a mechanical aptitude test to assess their skills. Previous experience and prior learning are confirmed including core skills achievement. Learning styles are also confirmed through completion of a quiz. Employers are fully involved in the initial assessment process with details of current job role discussed to ensure qualifications are appropriately matched to workplace requirements. Career progression objectives are also considered. Additional support needs are discussed with the apprentice and appropriate support strategies agreed to meet individual requirements. Information is collated in an MA submission form which can be shared with colleagues. This form records relevant details such as dietary requirements and medical conditions. Together these arrangements enable the provider to successfully plan for individual needs, tailor training accordingly and optimize the opportunity for all apprentices to progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Learning and assessment planning is very effective. Individually tailored learning plans are agreed for each apprentice, training and assessment schedules being agreed with the employer to successfully integrate with employer led activities in the workplace. Strong relationships with the employer support GTG to understand workplace requirements and they clearly demonstrate flexibility in meeting employer and learner needs e.g., for the logistics qualification, assessor meetings are scheduled for early morning or late evening to fit with employee shift patterns and driver rest periods. A site checklist is completed for new employer premises to confirm that the workplace setting is suitable for training and assessment of learning and employers can deliver the standard expected. Additional needs requirements

are incorporated well into learning plans and outline approaches to support. Clear timetabling of off-the-job training supports employers and apprentices to plan effectively and agree suitable goals and timeframes for progress. This means that apprentices have purposeful learning plans, feel involved in the development of the plan, and understand what is expected of them.

- GTG has a robust and responsive approach to employer involvement, building strong and collaborative relationships with them. Comments from employer interviews such as “we would not go anywhere else for our training” and “communications are excellent” exemplify the very positive relationships built up, with many employers returning year on year to GTG to meet their staff training requirements. GTG is proactive in involving employers in the design and delivery of training and use their feedback effectively to ensure the employer voice adds value to training delivery. For example, some employers in the electronic security systems sector expressed a wish for apprentices to be trained in all aspects of the framework qualification options, thus ensuring they could offer the best possible service to their customers. Optional unit selection and development of learning plans were then tailored in response to employer requirements. Similarly in the automotive sector, a growing demand for apprentices to be trained in electric and hybrid vehicles led to the creation of a dedicated workshop for training in this specialism. These approaches demonstrate that the provider recognises the value of the employer voice in the design and preparation of training delivery.
- The provider uses partnerships very well to support transition and progression of apprentices. Effective partnerships with schools and delivery of the Foundation Apprenticeship programme provide meaningful opportunities to recruit to the MA programme. A partnership with Concept Northern provides additional sources of support for apprentices with barriers to learning to ensure they can successfully progress. GTG are an accredited training organisation for the Career Transition Partnership, and the Ministry of Defence Resettlement programme, offering training to for those moving from the armed forces to civilian roles. The provider routinely reviews the effectiveness of partnerships through management meetings and feedback. As a result, they can monitor the impact of partnerships on their MA programme and demonstrate how partnerships positively enhance programme delivery.
- GTG has appropriate and effective mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate sub-contractor delivery. Sub-contractors are required to sign a comprehensive contract agreement. This detailed document clearly outlines the obligations of each party and specific mention is made of the expectations of the SDS contract and conditions. This ensures that sub-contractors are informed of their responsibilities in relation to training delivery. Regular scheduled meetings with sub-contractors provide appropriate opportunities to discuss performance and progress of individual apprentices. The provider was able to clearly demonstrate during the assessment visit changes they are making to sub-contracting arrangements based on apprentice feedback and monitoring of sub-contractor delivery. This highlights their commitment to continuous improvement and management of sub-contractors.

Areas for Improvement or Development

- One employer relatively new to the apprentice programme noted that, while they value the progress review meeting process and are very satisfied with the training programme, for enhancement they would like to receive even more detailed information in the progress review meeting template. This would further support them to plan specific workplace activities matched to apprentice goals for the period.
- A few apprentices commented on the availability of college resources in relation to automotive training specifically around lack of electric vehicle resources. The provider is already aware of this and had, prior to the assessment visit, taken steps to address the matter going forward.

Effective practice – this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider

Induction

There is a robust process in place that provides apprentices with a thorough and detailed introduction to their training programme. Inductions are carried out face to face as the preferred option and scheduled to fit with apprentice and employer availability. Comprehensive induction booklets, tailored specifically for each occupational sector, provide learners with clear information on a range of topics including -

- GTG training centre rules
- expectations of apprentices (standards and behaviours)
- policies e.g. equality and diversity, plagiarism, appeals and complaints
- SDS validation processes
- qualification structure
- assessment processes
- introduction to e-portfolio
- roles and responsibilities
- key contacts
- My World of Work
- welfare information and links to SPACE (GTG's online health and wellbeing app)

Employers are fully involved in the induction process and supported very well to understand their role in apprentice learning. An excellent Mentor Guide has been developed that explains the purpose of a mentor in the workplace; the responsibilities of a mentor; a breakdown of the framework/ qualification; the anticipated timelines for apprentice progress and completion of each element; an overview of Smart Assessor and One File e-portfolios; suggested questions to ask apprentices when discussing their progress and a list of key support contacts in GTG.

For those apprentices employed by the Arnold Clark Group, a helpful induction video provides apprentices and their parents/families with an overview of the employer, GTG training facilities and what to expect during their apprenticeship. Feedback from apprentices demonstrates that they value the induction process. As a result of the clear and comprehensive induction, apprentices have a clear understanding of what to expect during training and the support available to help them achieve their goals.

Equality Groups

GTG demonstrate a clear commitment to diversity and inclusion. They design and prepare training provision extremely well to meet the specific needs of equality groups. GTG has a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policy and a dedicated staff resource leads on ensuring that the provider offers an inclusive learning environment where every apprentice is valued and has the same opportunities and resources to succeed regardless of need. The SEND policy drives the provider's approach to meeting the unique needs of each learner.

GTG actively engage with apprentices at the outset to ascertain individual support requirements and implement alternative arrangements to meet these needs. Mindful that personal circumstances may change over time, positive steps are taken by assessors to have meaningful discussions with apprentices during their learning journey to identify where additional support may be required. All apprentices interviewed confirmed that they are aware of the support available to them, and they have discussions with assessors about additional support on a regular basis during their training. Examples of adjustments made include arranging additional time during tests, alternative assessment methods, reading / scribing and additional practical sessions in the driving manoeuvre area. The provider is very pro-active in developing a detailed understanding of those with protected characteristics. Learning Support Cards provide a valuable tool for staff, increasing their knowledge and understanding of specific conditions and helping them to implement appropriate support for apprentices. Cards for dyscalculia, dyslexia, dysgraphia, hearing impairment, visual impairment, mental health issues, personal behaviour and autism spectrum provide an overview of each condition and how these may present; strategies to support individuals with the condition; and alternative assessment options.

In addition to providing a wide range of staff training and development in relation to supporting those with additional support needs, GTG delivery staff are trained Mental Health First Aiders. This supportive learning environment ensures that apprentices' individual needs are accommodated, and they can progress and complete their qualification regardless of barriers to learning.

Transferable skills

GTG has designed a programme of transferable skills that clearly adds value to training delivery and contributes effectively to the personal development of apprentices. GTG go beyond the minimum requirements of the qualification to support this development. Apprentices receive a Core skills Guide which details what core skills are; their purpose; how they benefit individuals and employers; outlines each of the five core skills requirements and how these might be demonstrated; how they are assessed; and how they fit with framework requirements. Links to further information on core skills on the SDS website are included in the guide. Almost all apprentices had a very clear understanding of core skills and knew what they still had to achieve. For example, one apprentice described how they had achieved two core skills within a few months of starting their training and how this had helped their development. Naturally occurring evidence is used to support progression of core skills and this is discussed throughout the learning journey, e.g., during progress review and assessment meetings and during off-the-job training sessions. This ensures that apprentices have a clear understanding of a key component of their training programme and its value in their job role.

Career Management skills are discussed with apprentices from the outset with career aspirations noted and a pathway to progression discussed. During the visit, an example of career progression was noted where an administration apprentice had successfully progressed to a management role within the organisation.

Meta-Skills

While not a mandatory requirement of the frameworks offered, GTG have embraced opportunities to support apprentices to reflect on meta-skills development. An excellent example of this was noted by the assessment team in relation to automotive apprentices. A cross-disciplinary project encouraged learners to develop their meta-skills and reflect on their learning. Automotive apprentices were tasked with working collaboratively to restore a Mini car. Body-shop apprentices and light vehicle apprentices used their different skills to assess the damage on the body work, diagnose mechanical faults and agree a restoration plan. Collaboration with Arnold Clark digital print staff further developed ideas for “wrapping” the vehicle in livery which outlined the various meta-skills which they had developed, thus advertising meta-skills. On conclusion of the project, a newly restored vehicle showcased the meta-skills that the group considered they had developed including

- problem solving
- communication
- collaboration
- creativity
- curiosity
- critical thinking
- self-management

The project highlighted the relevance of meta-skills both within and beyond the workplace and provided a unique opportunity to promote development of meta-skills through a vehicle restoration project.

Resources

Resources are planned extremely well to maximise the quality of delivery. Continuing investment in the provider’s training facilities in Edinburgh and Glasgow has ensured that the training environment and available resources, both physical and online, develop and adapt appropriately to meet apprentice and employer needs and stay abreast of industry developments. For example, recognising the automotive sector was seeing an increase in electric / hybrid vehicle sales and the resulting demand from employers for training on those vehicles, the provider created a new training facility dedicated to this vehicle type where apprentices can develop their knowledge and skills in a growth market. In addition, there is a dedicated bus and heavy goods vehicle training facility in Glasgow.

GTG has developed a workshop dedicated to Electronic Security Systems training with 12 individual work pods where apprentices can develop their skills using the latest industry standard tools and materials. The pods are “stripped down” and refreshed for each cohort of apprentices. This replicates the live working environment ensuring individuals have opportunities to practice techniques in a range of activities such as fire protection systems and security alarm installation in a variety of settings. Employers value the opportunity for their apprentices to practice new skills in a safe environment and develop the competencies and knowledge that will enhance and add value to their business. Classrooms, meeting rooms and

conference facilities are fully equipped with IT facilities further enhancing the resources available to apprentices and employers.

GTG offer on-site modern café facilities and breakout areas providing high quality rest areas for apprentices and staff.

Apprentices attending off-the-job training all receive a generous supply of GTG branded polo shirts, overalls and safety boots. Apprentices appreciate these, making them feel part of a team when on site. Those staying away from home are accommodated in hotels with transport provided to and from the training centres.

The provider has a wide range of modern training vehicles of different categories that reflect the different categories of driving licence issued by DVLA. This ensures employer needs are met and apprentices have access to the appropriate training vehicle for their qualification.

Within the Glasgow training site, there is a dedicated vehicle manoeuvre area where apprentices can practice their skills in advance of sitting their driving test. This facility supplements on the road training, improves driver competence, increases confidence, and successfully supports apprentices to pass their driving test and complete their qualification.

The introduction of e-portfolios (SmartAssessor and OneFile depending on framework) has seen many benefits for apprentices, employers and staff including increased accessibility (e-portfolios are available 24/7 via any device) and collaboration. Where preferred, apprentices have the option of using a paper portfolio. Helpful online e-portfolio guides are available to support navigation of the system. Policies and procedures and manuals are all accessible online further supporting apprentices to access the information they need at a time and place convenient to them. GTG Key Policies, course outlines and calendars and classroom schedules are also available.

GTG offers a valuable set of resources in recognition of the impact that health and wellbeing have on an individual's capacity to learn and develop in the workplace. GTG SPACE is an online health and wellbeing hub where learners can access a wide range of advice and support. Four key areas – Healthy Mind; Healthy Body; Healthy Finances; and Healthy Resources – provide meaningful information on a range of topics along with links to specialist organisations that can offer confidential advice and support. In the hub, several case studies are provided where apprentice share their experiences of mental health issues and the support available. This is a valuable resource, providing a holistic approach to individual learning and wellbeing.

Continued investment in resources ensures they remain fit for purpose, meet industry expectations, and supports apprentices very well to sustain and complete their training.

Learner goal setting and progress

GTG is highly effective in setting clear and collaborative goals. Progress review meetings take place at least every three months (in some frameworks they are more frequent) and are effective in supporting apprentices to set goals, monitor their progress and meet their learning goals. Wherever possible, meetings are held face to face. Apprentice interviews confirm they understand the purpose of the progress review and value the constructive feedback which supports them to understand their achievements to date and goals for the future. Apprentices value the knowledge and industry experience of the assessors who use this to good effect to support apprentice development. Observations confirm progress review meetings are very well structured and focus on progress and achievements; core skills development; setting future goals and objectives; employer feedback and additional needs. Formal review meetings provide well planned opportunities for apprentice self-reflection and support them to understand progress and development. In most cases, employers participate in discussions,

and this provides valuable feedback to support progression. Where employers are unable to attend the meeting, there is an opportunity to feedback via the progress review template. Progress is detailed on the apprentice's e-portfolio, providing the employer and apprentice with a clear record of their learning journey.

During off-the-job-training, classroom lesson plan boards are used to very good effect to support learning goal setting and progress. For each classroom session, aims and objectives are agreed and noted on the lesson plan board. In addition, the board displays-

- timeslots for each topic during the day
- topics to be completed
- teaching activity and assessment plans
- learner activity / practical work
- technical terms that will be in use during the session
- links between activities and core skills
- equality and diversity considerations such as respect and tolerance

Progress of apprentices is monitored closely and effectively at individual level and group / cohort level through a robust Group Progress Tracker. This provides managers and quality staff with comprehensive data to track progress, identify where individuals are falling behind planned outcome dates and put in place additional support where required.

Daily attendance records are maintained during off-the-job training blocks to track apprentice absence, identify trends, explore any underlying reasons for non-attendance and agree appropriate support strategies to ensure individuals remain on track to successfully complete their training.

Quality Assurance of Practice Leading to Improvement and Enhancement of Services

There is an excellent culture of quality assurance, clearly demonstrating the provider's commitment to continuously improving standards in training delivery. Specific staff resources within the organisational structure (Head of Quality and Quality Systems Manager) lead on activities to drive improvements. Through the company's well-established quality cycle, internal quality assurance activities measure the impact of internal quality systems. Collaborative working across the organisation, coupled with reflection and sharing of practice, is an integral part of programme delivery. Very good use is made of opportunities to reflect on the quality of training provision. Regular standardisation meetings are scheduled for each qualification area. Staff interviews and meeting minutes confirm that these meetings provide valuable opportunities to share good practice, consider any areas of concern in assessment processes and discuss feedback from external verification visits. In addition to the sharing of good practice within each qualification area, the Quality Systems Manager maintains a spreadsheet record of all external verification report feedback. They compare findings from across the different qualification areas and share identified good practice across the different assessor teams. This maximises opportunities for good practice to be incorporated into delivery as widely as possible.

Peer review, observation of practice and reflection is an integral part of GTG's quality assurance practice. Internal Verifier staff have a schedule of Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) in line with the provider's detailed Internal Quality Assurance Policy. Detailed records are maintained of the outcomes of OTLA activity, with clear feedback to assessors noted on a feedback template. This enables the quality team

to collate information on standards of delivery. Peer reviews offer further opportunities to observe and reflect on practice and support colleague development. Regular “Learning Walks” are carried out by trained assessor managers and quality staff to observe classroom delivery, identify what is working well and where there may be areas for enhancement to inform continuous improvement of delivery. Staff interviews confirm they are fully engaged in the process and have a clear understanding of the quality assurance approaches in place across the organisation. Together these activities demonstrate that the provider has a very comprehensive approach to quality assurance of practice.

Leadership and Quality Culture

Strengths - These are the things that are working well for the provider

- The provider is very effective in managing and supporting staff to deliver the apprenticeship programme. Staff resources are planned well to ensure sufficient staff with the right skills and competencies are in place to meet training demand. Staff feel very well supported in their role and the commitment and motivation of the delivery team was evident from both staff interviews and feedback from apprentices and employers. Workloads are well planned and an online “heatmap” of assessor and apprentice locations across Scotland supports effective management of caseload allocation. Where there is unexpected absence, robust contingency plans are activated to ensure continuity of training delivery for apprentices and employers. Staff absence and associated contingency plans are included in the provider’s risk register and risk management process. For new GTG employees, there is a clear employee journey with a two-part interview process; an initial screening interview followed by a competency and values-based interview. New staff receive a comprehensive induction to the company and shadow experienced staff to become familiar with processes and procedures. Communication is very effective within and across staff teams. Informal, ad hoc discussions in the office and workshop areas complement the more formal team meeting / management meeting structures in place. Together these provide staff with purposeful opportunities to contribute their views and ideas.
- There is a systematic and effective approach to self-assessment in place as part of the provider’s quality cycle activity. Responsibility for completion of the annual self-assessment / quality action plan exercise sits with the Quality Systems Manager who gathers information to inform this exercise throughout the year. A pro-active approach to gathering both qualitative and quantitative data from across the delivery teams ensures that staff involvement is regular and meaningful and contributes effectively to the self-assessment process. These approaches clearly demonstrate the provider’s ongoing commitment to the continuous improvement of their training programme.
- GTG demonstrate a clear commitment to investment in technology and new resources to support industry developments, for example electric and hybrid vehicles, fire protection systems and IT systems. Attendance at industry events and networking with other training providers and employers in the sectors in which

GTG operate enables them to seek out best practice, explore future requirements for industry and prepare to incorporate these into training provision. The pandemic accelerated the rate of change towards the use of online platforms such as MS Teams and iShare for collaboration and communication and these are now well-established within the organisation. GTG have a rigorous approach to ensuring that they are aware of any new legislation that impacts on training requirements, and they adapt courses to reflect these changes e.g., DVSA requirements. Staff are encouraged and empowered to make improvements to delivery. The Think Customer Think Employee initiatives provide further opportunities to submit ideas for change and continuous improvement. Together, these approaches demonstrate that the provider fully embraces innovation and change and incorporates these for the benefit of apprentices, employers, and staff through a culture of continuous improvement.

- The Arnold Clark Group has published a comprehensive Carbon Management Plan and GTG are a key contributor in meeting the plan's objectives to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 with key milestone targets in the intervening years. The plan forms part of their sustainability initiative SENSE: A Sustainable Environment for Nature, Society and the Economy which encourages staff and apprentices to make a difference through positive action such as recycling, reducing the use of paper, reducing journeys, and using electric vehicles. This initiative demonstrates the provider's commitment to ensuring resources are used in a sustainable way.

Areas for Improvement or Development

- None identified during the visit

Effective practice– this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider

Diverse Recruitment to Support Youth / Employment

GTG demonstrates a clear commitment to supporting the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee initiative and understands the benefits of diversity in the workforce. Positive steps are taken to promote training opportunities in frameworks where traditionally there is gender imbalance. Marketing materials explain the many benefits of completing an apprenticeship while images on the provider's website promote diversity and challenge gender stereotypes. GTG's training vehicles carry distinctive livery with training course and company contact details clearly visible. This is an effective way of advertising when the training vehicles are travelling on public roads.

The GTG initiative Girls with Skills is an excellent example of pro-activity to improve recruitment of under-represented groups in the automotive sector. A three-stage programme is designed to give experience of an apprenticeship with taster sessions in a GTG training facility followed by a week's work experience in an Arnold Clark branch. Opportunities to experience apprenticeship selection tests and speak with current apprentices are also offered. These approaches support young people to consider a wide range of options and make informed choices.

GTG actively encourage progression from their Foundation Apprenticeship programme and partnerships with external organisations such as Princes Trust provides opportunities to engage with potential candidates from under-represented groups.

Equality monitoring of applications to the programme provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of targeted marketing and inclusive recruitment practice and supports GTG to set future targets for improvements. As a result of their approaches, GTG demonstrate a strong support for the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee Initiative.

Future Focussed Strategy underpinned by LMI

The provider is highly effective in utilising employer and strategic links to gather labour market intelligence, which informs their development and planning of future training provision. GTG take appropriate steps to explore and understand their ecosystem and have successfully developed a clear work-based learning strategy that considers the changing needs of their customers. For example, Digital Applications training supports the wider Arnold Clark group through the training of apprentices in IT systems support roles. GTG make good use of SDS Skills Investment Plans and Scottish Government published statistics to inform future planning. They work closely with employers and industry bodies such as the Freight Transport Association and the Institute of the Motor Industry to understand trends and identify future demand. For example, by researching the percentage of technicians who were qualified to work on electric vehicles and the growth in sales of such vehicles, GTG identified a future skills gap and a growth in employer demand for training in this area. This informed their strategy to develop a dedicated electric / hybrid vehicle training area. Similarly, research into the shortage of lorry drivers across the United Kingdom led to freight logistics apprentices being offered the opportunity to upgrade their licence category, increasing their career progression opportunities and meeting a growing employer demand for their skills. As a result, GTG developed a work-based learning strategy that considers the changing needs of customers and market trends.

Staff Development

GTG demonstrate a strong commitment to staff development with clearly planned programmes of continuing professional development that match individual requirements. Regular meetings with line managers, both informal discussions and formal appraisal meetings, provide meaningful opportunities to identify individual development needs, and these are recorded in Personal Development Plans. Continuing Professional Development Records (CPDRs) demonstrate the activities that individuals undertake, how these link to specific objectives in the personal development plan and how this learning will be implemented going forward. Staff are actively encouraged to self-identify activities that will support their professional development. GTG place a high priority on a "grow your own" approach with many staff having been with the organisation for many years and progressing to more senior roles.

GTG has a well-planned approach to mandatory staff training with a comprehensive Mandatory Training and Development online portal that is updated each year. An Employee Role and Development Matrix clearly indicates the mandatory courses each job role / grade must complete and the frequency of renewal. Mandatory courses include staying safe online; data protection; safeguarding; and equality, diversity, and inclusion. Additional mandatory training for managers includes Managing Health and Safety and Managing Safe Recruitment. All staff have access to an in-house app ACE (Arnold Clark Employee) which offers more than 300 different training modules covering a wide range of topics including equality and diversity; communications and social skills; mental health awareness; health and safety and qualification specific learning.

The Staff Profiles and Development Matrix (SDM) is an online tool that supports managers to track team members' appraisal meetings and one to one discussions, training and development plans, training completed, and certificates achieved. This software package provides a comprehensive tool for managers to methodically monitor staff training and development and record the impact of training activities.

Provider commitment to staff development that supports delivery of training provision is further demonstrated through investment in courses such as teaching qualifications for trainers and management qualifications.

GTG, through their contract management arrangements, ensure that sub-contractor staff undertake appropriate CPD activities.

Through their quality systems activities, the impact and added value of staff training is considered. GTG's investment in staff training is appreciated, mutually beneficial and enhances the quality of programme delivery.

Outcomes and Impacts (Results²)

Strengths - These are the results that are good for the provider

- The provider demonstrates an increasing trend in overall achievement rates over a three-year period from 2020-21 to 2022-23 and exceeded the SDS target (75%) in the last contracting year. This overall positive trend was achieved despite the adverse impact of the pandemic on some occupational areas such as freight logistics.
- GTG segments their results to monitor achievement rates of each cohort of apprentices for each framework and the performance of sub-contractors. Section managers use this data to identify trends and understand where there are any areas of concern. This pro-active approach to data analysis supports them well to meet and exceed SDS targets.
- In 2022-23 just over half of the provider's apprentices were in the 16-19 age category and their achievement rate was on par with the national average.
- The achievement rate for apprentices in the 20-24 and 25+ age categories was above the national average in 2022-23.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of females participating in the programme over the last three years. The provider offers a number of diverse frameworks and in 2022-23 approximately 80% of their starts were in the Automotive and Transport occupational groupings. The gender balance improved over the last three years in both of these occupational areas and was in line with the national average.
- The participation rate of individuals from a BME background has increased over the last three years and was on par with the national average.
- The participation rate of care experienced individuals has remained static over a three-year period but was on par with the national average.

² The national performance data used for comparison / benchmarking is contained within the 2022-23 Modern Apprenticeship Supplementary Tables (Q4) which can be accessed from the SDS corporate website [here](#)

- GTG monitor their performance in relation to representation of the four key equality groups and take positive steps to improve participation. As a result of the Girls with Skills programme, female participation has increased in the automotive sector.
- The provider was awarded a RAG rating of green in their most recent SDS compliance audit which was carried out in July 2023.
- The provider clearly demonstrates that they take a pro-active approach to meeting the requirements of industry bodies. For example, GTG's transport training facility in Glasgow is an accredited driver test centre, approved by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), an executive agency of the UK Department for Transport.
- GTG's achievements have been recognised by a variety of external bodies. For example, they were awarded Training Provider of the Year at the 2019 Talent in Logistics Awards; a GTG apprentice reached the UK final of the World Skills Awards 2022 (an international "skills Olympics" competition that recognises excellence in apprenticeship and technical training). GTG were included in the Arnold Clark Group achievement of The Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award from the Ministry of Defence, recognising their commitment to the armed forces community. GTG's Operations Director was admitted as a Fellow of the Institute of the Motor Industry in 2022 in recognition of their contribution to the automotive industry.
- GTG celebrate success through annual company award ceremonies where apprentice achievements are recognised and celebrated with their families and delivery staff.
- Employer feedback demonstrates very high levels of satisfaction with training delivery with employers stating GTG is "their provider of choice" for their staff training requirements. The GTG sales manager analyses the GTG Customer Relationship Management system to identify trends in employer repeat business. This enables them to also identify and contact employers who have not returned to GTG to seek their feedback and promote GTG as a provider for future training needs.
- GTG clearly demonstrate that they make improvements to training delivery as a direct result of employer feedback. For example, the provision of additional electric/hybrid vehicle training facilities to support a growing demand in the sector and providing access to e-portfolios for all employers. Internally, GTG has responded to feedback from Arnold Clark branches, developing training provision in the digital sector to meet demand for IT support across the group of companies.
- Apprentice feedback demonstrates very high levels of satisfaction in relation to the training programme. Using an online platform, GTG promote a "you speak, we listen" approach to surveys which include questions on the quality of information received about the apprenticeship; the induction process; assessor support; quality of resources; framework/sector specific questions; value of progress reviews and feedback; impact of training on individual skills; and perception on whether GTG respond to apprentice feedback. This enables GTG to analyse results in relation to specific areas of delivery. To maximise feedback response rates, the provider has also introduced the use of QR codes as a convenient way of accessing Google reviews via SmartAssessor.
- GTG clearly demonstrate they make improvements to training delivery as a direct result of apprentice feedback. Using a "You Said, We Did" document, GTG highlight the changes they have implemented and encourage further feedback. For example, as a result of direct apprentice feedback, a new catering supplier was procured for the training centre and a refreshed menu made available. The hotel used for off-the-job

training accommodation was reviewed by GTG and changed to an alternative supplier as a direct result of apprentice feedback. Suggestions from apprentices are also routinely incorporated into the delivery model. For example, job cards are now available on SmartAssessor rather than being sent by email.

- GTG segment and analyse apprentice feedback by occupational group. This systematic approach to analysis of results enables them to compare feedback from different cohorts of learners, inform improvements and set targets for the future. In addition to planned, formal surveys, GTG also gather feedback from apprentices informally through progress review meetings and regular discussions with assessors. Feedback is used to inform quality improvement activities to further monitor delivery and identify ongoing continuous improvement to delivery.

Areas for Improvement or Development

- The participation rate from individuals with a self-declared impairment, health condition or learning disability has remained static over the last three years and was slightly below the national average in each of those years. It is acknowledged that some applicants with an impairment, health condition or learning disability do not meet the medically fit to drive criteria set by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and therefore do not meet the eligibility for some qualifications in the transport occupational group.

Effective practice– this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider

Awarding Body and Industry Body Requirements

33 awarding body external verification reports from the previous three years (including reports for sub-contractors) were available for review. Reports demonstrate consistently positive results across all subject areas with high confidence outcomes / green RAG / low risk ratings awarded for all reports. Good practice was identified by each awarding body highlighting the range of instruments of assessment utilised, the high quality of resources available at the GTG training centre, and the constructive and encouraging feedback offered to apprentices. There were no actions and only a few minor recommendations for consideration.

GTG have a systematic and very effective approach to the analysis of awarding body EV reports. The Quality Systems Manager collates all reports received from awarding bodies. The findings of each visit report are recorded in a spreadsheet that details the grade and RAG rating; actions (if any); recommendations; and good practice identified during the visit. This analysis activity complements assessors' discussions of individual reports within their teams.

Analysis by the Quality Systems Manager enables GTG to compare the EV report findings, identify any emerging trends across different qualification groups and demonstrate year on year outcomes from EV visits. This ensures that good practice identified in one area can then be shared across different occupational groups and used to inform enhancement to practice across the provider's training provision.

Safeguarding

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that apprentices know who to contact if any safeguarding concerns arise. All training centres have a dedicated Safeguarding Officer and their contact details are made clear to learners who can seek support, confidential advice and raise concerns. Apprentices receive information at induction and during their training about staying safe online, radicalisation, types of abuse and how to report concerns. Safeguarding information is displayed in training centres and the GTG Safeguarding Policy is available on the GTG website. This comprehensive policy outlines the provider's duty and commitment to putting in place systems and measures to keeping all learners safe from harm during their learning journey. A dedicated Safeguarding Lead meets regularly with Safeguarding Officers to discuss issues procedures. A process flow chart clearly outlines the procedures which GTG will follow should a concern be raised. All GTG staff are mandated to complete "Raising Awareness of Prevent" training. Safeguarding in relation to those required to stay away from home as part of their apprenticeship training is recognised as a heightened risk and appropriate protective measures put in place mitigate risks within hotel accommodation.

Appendix 1 - Quality Standard Grade Definitions

SERVICE DELIVERY

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to the operational planning and delivery of apprenticeships which are of a very high quality. There is an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating across the provider network. Apprenticeship planning and delivery is clearly adapted and tailored to meet the needs of every individual apprentice, including those from under-represented groups. All apprentices and employers are involved in the planning and delivery and all apprentices have ownership of their learner journey, optimising their chances of success and providing them with future-proofed vocational and transferable skills. The provider demonstrates they have effective/innovative approaches for meeting individuals' goals and monitoring and reviewing their progress that go beyond SDS 'compliance' requirements. It implies that the service offer is deemed to be sustainable and that the provider will continually seek ways in which to enhance their delivery.

LEADERSHIP & QUALITY CULTURE

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to the leadership and quality culture of the provider resulting in planning and delivery of apprenticeships which are of a very high quality. There is a sustainable culture of continuous improvement, embracing equality and diversity and the management and development of WBL related staff to ensure that training provided is optimal for all apprentices and their employers. The provider is innovative, works with appropriate partners to optimise their service, and thinks strategically about the future of their WBL provision. There are examples of very best practice, worthy of disseminating across the provider network.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to the recent past relevant results of the provider which reflect extremely high satisfaction with all aspects of their apprenticeship provision by apprentices, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. This includes how well the provider considers their impact on under-represented groups. The provider has a systematic and proactive approach to gathering relevant quantitative and qualitative data and analysing it. There is a strong track record of high rates of apprentice achievement in all of the framework areas they operate in and across different pertinent equality groups which are reflective (i.e., there is a causal relationship) of the service offer and leadership provided.

The provider promotes and explicitly celebrates the success of individual apprentices and sets themselves appropriate incremental targets for improvement on areas that they see will enhance their service.

Quantifying Statements and Proportions

Description of numbers and proportions	%
All	100%
Almost all	91 – 99%
Most	75 – 90%
Majority	50 – 74%
Minority / less than half	16 – 49%
Few	Up to 15%