

Employer Engagement and Responsiveness Policy

Re-approved:	August 2023
Review by	August 2024
Authorised by	C Gavaghan (CEO)

Strategy description:

This policy outlines the context and purpose of employer engagement. It aims to clarify operation and procedure in order to maximise opportunities for working with employers and build long term relationships, making Derwent Training Association the provider of choice to the benefit of the Company, employers, and the local & national economy.

Supporting documentation:

North Yorkshire County Council 2020-2024 Plan

1.0 Executive summary

This Policy outlines how to carry out employer engagement and responsiveness. It outlines clear practice and standards to deal with employer enquiries to ensure that the Derwent Training Association (Derwent Training; the Company) delivers an efficient, professional, and quality service. Derwent Training delivers apprenticeship training in the Engineering & Manufacturing sector within North Yorkshire.

2.0 Context

Derwent Training is currently operating in a recovering & uncertain economy with on-going changes to apprenticeship funding. There are well-documented skills plans produced by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) that Derwent Training operates under geographically. Derwent Training seeks to support and implement LEP and Government skills plans by utilising available funding and encouraging employer investment and ownership in training.

2.1 The Company acts as a hub of knowledge and learning which supports the local economy within North Yorkshire, developing skills of people who are working in the engineering sector, and supporting local business to improve the skills of their current workforce to drive quality, innovation, efficiency, and growth. Derwent Training is committed to providing employers with the skills they and their workforce need to succeed in business.

2.2 There are two strands to this area of work:

- Employer Engagement
- Employer Responsiveness

2.3 Employer Engagement (EE) describes links with external organisations by academic institutions, involving input, connection, or support. Within the post-16 sector, Employer Responsiveness (ER) refers to the practice and delivery of training and development solutions to meet the needs of employers. The difference therefore is that Employer Responsiveness focuses mainly on the employer, and less immediately on the employees/learners/delegates and their personal experience of the intervention or solution offered by the provider. Impact of the intervention tends to be measured in the context of the business rather than the individual, although of course there is an inextricable link between the two.

2.4 Derwent Training engages with employers to provide Employer Engagement and Employer Responsiveness, as follows:

2.4.1 Managing all apprenticeship employer relations to ensure Derwent Training meets employer needs and that apprentices make progress. This includes proactively approaching new employers to

2.4.1.1 increase apprenticeship vacancies,

2.4.1.2 introduce resources such as Find Apprenticeship Training

2.4.1.3 maintain and manage ongoing relationships.

2.4.2 Delivering training that responds directly to employer requests, maintains client relations, and promotes a portfolio of workforce development training.

2.5 This policy outlines procedures to maximise the opportunities for Derwent Training to work with employers to develop training solutions that meet their identified needs both immediately and in the future.

3.0 Scope

The provisions of this policy apply to all work-related provision in Derwent Training, taking place either on Company premises or elsewhere. This ranges from informal links, giving employers the opportunity to feedback and influence provision, learners sponsored by employers, educationally enriching trips, visits and guest speakers to formal work-based learning provision and bespoke business training. The policy is communicated to staff through internal communication channels and where appropriate through ongoing staff development.

- 3.1 Adherence to the policy requires that initial enquiries from employers into Derwent Training be referred to the Business Support Team. This ensures Derwent Training/employer contacts are managed in such a way that promotes the services of Derwent Training, allows for the building of long-term relationships, evaluates activities taking place with employers, and assesses the impact of them. The Business Support Team has overall responsibility for managing relationships with employers and has authority to act independently and take appropriate decisions within parameters agreed by the Senior Leadership Team.

4.0 Aims

- 4.1 Through effective execution of this policy, Derwent Training aims to:

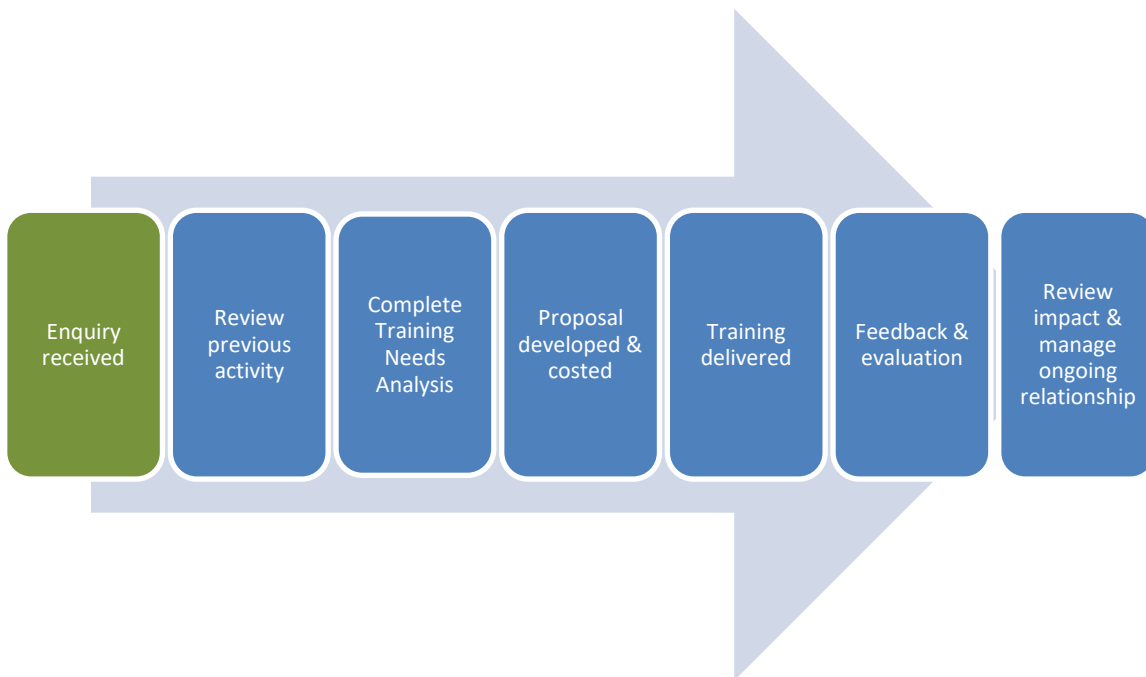
- 4.1.1 Contribute to local and national productivity by offering suitable qualifications and training to meet the needs of the engineering and manufacturing sector;
- 4.1.2 Provide support to employers to develop their workforce, managers, and business;
- 4.1.3 Ensure learners graduate with vocational, employability and enterprise skills and prove an asset to the future workforce;
- 4.1.4 Provide a consistent, professional approach to employers including response and follow up on any activity undertaken to include evaluation, impact assessment and on-going relationship management;
- 4.1.5 Utilise funding from the Education & Skills Funding Agency, seek alternative funding streams, and increase employer investment in employees.

5.0 Policy

- 5.1 Derwent Training aims to meet the needs of learners, the community, and the employer and employee needs of businesses. This will usually be as an individual provider but may be as part of a consortium, however in either case the ethos is one of providing high quality training, a consistent approach and excellent customer service.
- 5.2 In relation to training activity, contacts will be managed in such a way as to ensure that employers are contacted appropriately, and wherever possible, by one named contact.
- 5.3 Enquiries coming into Derwent Training from employers will be referred to the Business Support Team. Internal communications will be primarily by email in order to create a documented "history", wherever possible. It is the responsibility of the "referrer" to retain ownership of a referral until an acknowledgement is received that appropriate action is being taken.
- 5.4 The hallmark of the Derwent Training's ethos is for all staff to support high quality training in all delivery environments, maintain high standards in professional working relationships and strive for the highest customer satisfaction levels.

6 Referrals and negotiations with employers

- 6.1 When staff are liaising with employers, they should be alert to the possibilities of further work with, and meeting the needs of, that employer. Where this is identified, the referral should follow the same process described above, to maximise benefits to Derwent Training and the employer.
- 6.2 Adherence to service standards is essential when building relationships with all our customers. Employers often work to very tight time scales and expect speedy and focused responses and exacting standards of service. Referrals from employers should be passed on wherever possible within one working day, and within a maximum of two working days. Follow up contact with the employer should take place within the same timescales. An employer should therefore be contacted within one or two working days but within an unconditional maximum of four working days.
- 6.3 On receipt of a referral, details will be logged in the Employer Engagement Folder. This allows staff to log and monitor progress on the referral process, as well as retaining client history to support the future relationship.
- 6.4 Once an enquiry has been received, the Business Support Team will work with the employer to identify their training needs and provide a cost-effective programme, at a time and place convenient to the employer, as per the diagram below:



- 6.5 Proposed training solutions are co-created after an appropriate training needs analysis (TNA) is undertaken by a nominated member of staff. This takes into account any flexibility required by the employer.
- 6.6 Agreed training solutions are confirmed by the Business Support Team and communicated to the employer. This will usually be in the form of a standard confirmation email.
- 6.7 The solutions will be specifically linked to employer's business goals and ensure that any training provided will make an impact on their business. Identified impact measurements are discussed & confirmed with the client. This will normally be re-visited after the training has taken

place in order to evaluate effectiveness, assess impact and assess further opportunities by on-going relationship management. However, whilst on-programme Derwent Training will maintain continuous engagement and record all coaching, mentoring, and training undertaken.

- 6.8 The timing and location of training is agreed to meet employers' needs, subject to agreement of the financial proposal.
- 6.9 Where Derwent Training is unable to provide appropriate training to meet the requirements of an employer, the Business Support Team will ensure that the employer is referred to another appropriate private or public sector provider capable of providing the service.

7 Employer and learner satisfaction measure

- 7.1 All learners taking part in training will complete an evaluation form whilst on-programme and at the conclusion of a programme. Satisfaction ratings are critically reviewed, and measures put in place to improve quality of provision to continually raise satisfaction levels. Any identified issues will be picked up within 48 hours by Business Support Team, who will investigate the situation and, where appropriate, refer to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 7.2 Employers are surveyed whilst employees are on-programme and following the end of a training programme. Any issues arising from the provision of training or services to employers is logged, reviewed and remedies put in place. Further training needs identified by employers will be identified and progressed promptly to the Business Support Team. Written permission is sought from the employer to use any quotes from surveys/questionnaires.
- 7.3 Achievement rates for qualification-based training are reviewed on a regular basis through the Derwent Training's quality assurance processes. Tripartite apprentice progress reviews also help maintain a continuous cycle of monitoring and improving engagement and maintain contact with employers.
- 7.4 Derwent Training's formal complaints procedure is made explicit to employers and learners to enable them to escalate issues if the need arises.

8 Equality & Diversity

Delivery staff will ensure that the diversity of learners, employers and the community is reflected in training programme content. Learning materials will be carefully chosen and constructed to ensure they comply with the Derwent Training's ethos and Equality & Diversity Policy. Where appropriate, employers are supported to ensure that they meet legislative requirements.

9 Sharing Good Practice

Good practice in employer engagement and responsiveness is shared through discussion at meetings, collaboration and sharing of learning resources and plans in electronic schemes of work and resource folders. Observations of trainers captures instances of good practice. The Company's CPD programme will address the sharing of good practice by scheduling appropriate events.

10 Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for this policy. Senior Managers and Lead Trainers ensure that the policy is implemented appropriately.

6. Appendix A - Protocols for employer contacts

1. Telephone enquiries

When a telephone enquiry comes in from an employer in relation to training or consultancy, it must be referred to the Business Support Team in order for any previous activity with that employer to be checked and for the enquiry to be logged.

The Business Support Team will make contact with the employer in order to determine their needs and to offer a business development visit and training needs analysis (TNA). Once needs have been established and any training activity agreed, delivery will be discussed or delivery arranged. The Business Support Team will seek to develop an on-going relationship with the employer and maximise the opportunities for further activity.

2. Answerphones

The phone system should ensure that unanswered calls are redirected to the Business Support team so that messages are not missed, and the team can respond directly to the employer needs.

3. Email enquiries

Email enquiries from employers should be forwarded to the Business Support Team. Email "Out of Office" messages should follow the Derwent Training's standard protocol.