

Assessment Report

Barrow Training Partnership Ltd
(BTP Cumbria)

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
Assessment Type	Review Assessment
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Dr. Sue Newberry
Evidence Gathering/Assessment Date/s	9 th , 10 th and 13 th January 2025
Client ID and Assessment Reference	C24424 - PN202648
Accreditation Review to be conducted by	20/12/2027

METHODOLOGY	
Evidence gathering	Hybrid assessment – onsite 9 th and 10 th January and remote interviews on Monday 13 th January via ZOOM
Staff interviews	8
Recipient interviews	12
Partner interviews	5
Document review	Promotional materials, learner documentation including induction pack, Key Performance Indicator (KPI) monitoring report, various policies, operational plans, learner feedback summary, self-assessment report and improvement plans. A demonstration of data management systems.

About the organisation

Barrow Training Partnership Ltd (BTP Cumbria) are a well-established training provider dedicated to supporting the construction industry across Cumbria. The team has built a bespoke training venue in the middle of Carlisle with easy access to public transport, including the train station. Training is delivered here as well as at different sites across the region.

BTP Cumbria is accredited by several awarding bodies including City and Guilds. The organisation offers a range of specialist programs aimed at the construction industry including short courses such as Street Works (NRSWA operator and supervisor levels), Confined Spaces (medium risk), Mobile Access Towers (PASMA), Face to Fit - Train the Tester, Abrasive Wheel and Manual Handling, Location and Avoidance of Underground Apparatus.

They also offer a range of Skills Bootcamps supported by Enterprise Cumbria. Recent Skills Bootcamps include Construction Supervision/Manager, Construction Skills and Retrofitting Old Buildings.

BTP Cumbria is accredited for a wide range of NVQs and hence can satisfy requirements of their clients and registration schemes such as CHAS (Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme), CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme), CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme) and NPORS (National Plant Operators Registration Scheme). The team offer external and internal assessment of NVQs - the latter approach enables an employee within the company to become a trained assessor themselves.

Recently the team secured the contract assessing NVQs in the heritage sector for The Kings Foundation learners - all of whom are scheduled to complete by the end of March 2025. This involves team members supporting, assessing and providing IAG to recipients remotely as well as on site at Highgrove House and at Dumfries House.

Leaders work hard to initiate and build productive working relationships with local employers. This work is in line with their Employer Engagement Strategy and includes efforts to "provide high-quality, comprehensive and impartial information advice and guidance (IAG) about learning opportunities and career pathways". The team are very well established and respected in the area. Leaders keep up to date with local developments, such as the building of a local bypass which will drive demand for skilled workers and further training in the area.

Over the years BTP Cumbria have established significant long-term working relationships with key employers in Cumbria, such as Cubby Construction and they have long-term contracts with Cumberland and Westmoreland & Furness Councils, as a preferred supplier of Roads and Street Works training for their employees. The team have also been the preferred supplier for members of the Cumbria Training Group for over 20 years again regarding Roads and Street Works, Confined Spaces, Scaffold Inspection and PASMA Mobile Access Towers training.

Partners respect the specialist nature of BTP CUMBRIA 's work, the practical approach and conscientious IAG to ensure learners access the right training program.

“They're very good at checking if people are serious about doing the training.”

“They are totally reliable. We know what we're going to get from them. There's no reason to look at anyone else.”

“They take organisations seriously - they want repeat business.”

Partners recognise their specialist facilities, expert team members and their investment in the area.

“We've seen their offices – we like the set up.”

“They have the facility as well as the skills they've learned by delivering different courses”

“They've got the best venue is a purpose-built building and it's got plenty of ground.”

“They are a very knowledgeable team.”

Partners appreciate the good communication in place with themselves and with the learners.

“It's been working well - they're good at communication, they keep in touch.”

“They keep in touch with their learners and encourage people to come back for further training later on.”

“Communication has been good.”

“They want to work with you and you'll get straightforward advice. They're not thinking about profit. It's about what you need.”

Partners have recognised BTP Cumbria's flexible and innovative approach to respond to the needs of the industry and the community.

“They try to be flexible.”

“Having local training providers supporting construction in Cumbria is very important.”

“They're always proactive they're always positive.”

“There's no training available locally for this – the nearest is in Leeds!”

“The best thing is their enthusiasm commitment to making a difference in our industry.”

“There's a huge skills crisis throughout the UK in construction – not many training providers are as practical in their approach.”

BTP Cumbria comprises a small team, including the Director, Training Coordinator, a Business Administrator and an Apprentice Administrator. A further member of staff supports all aspects of promotion. The Director focuses on developing the business and building relationships with local employers as well as co-designing new training programmes such as the Retrofitting Older Houses Skills Bootcamp with specialist

company, Ecological Building Systems. The Training Coordinator monitors progress against contracts and financial management. The Business Administrator organises short courses and the Apprentice Administrator currently has a particular focus on monitoring and evaluation. All experienced office staff can provide IAG to potential learners and employers and all are trained to do so in a consistent manner. The Director provides IAG to learners, often supports induction sessions and helps facilitate work placements and job search activities. The Associate Trainers and Assessors provide IAG to recipients during their training programmes.

All team members are clear about the importance of IAG throughout the learner journey. The Admissions and IAG policy states that the aim of IAG is "To enable individuals to reach their potential and achieve their goals". There are clear objectives outlined in the policy including the following KPIs.

- "100% of learners will receive pre-course information
- 100% of NVQ learners will receive IAG awareness at induction
- 100% of employed staff will be trained in IAG awareness
- 100% of associate staff will be given awareness information on IAG
- At least 95% retention on short courses
- At least 90% achievement rate on short courses
- At least 75% achievement for NVQs"

All team members are keen to delivery accurate and timely IAG that helps recipients to engage with the right course at the right time for them and that the training programme selected supports their long-term career aspirations.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

The team proactively promotes their training programmes via several channels, including social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), leaflets, posters, website as well as newsletters. The team also uses case studies, images and video clips to encourage a wide range of potential recipients to engage with their training programmes. For example, posters and flyers entitled "Women in Construction" include an image of a young lady who successfully engaged in a Construction Skills Bootcamp and who has secured employment. She now inspires other women to get involved with the construction industry - the organisation has recently run its first women only Skills Bootcamp which proved very successful. Recipients commented not only on the excellent training and IAG provided but they also enjoyed the relaxed and convivial atmosphere of the female only group. Recipients confirmed that they heard about the organisation through a wide range of sources including word-of-mouth, indeed, social media posts, their employer as well as partner organisations such as a The Kings Foundation.

Clear, accessible information is provided to employers and recipients about training programs available. For example, a Skills Bootcamp for Construction Supervisors and Managers explains who should attend the course, its objectives and contents.

Detailed initial IAG is provided to employers and to potential recipients on the telephone or when meeting the person face-to-face. Team members have described in detail how carefully they discuss eligibility requirements, the nature of the course and any specific questions pertinent to the training programme they are interested in. There is a checklist that helps ensure a consistent approach to IAG for all potential recipients regardless of which member of the team responds to the initial inquiry.

Initial IAG is followed by an application and interview process through which the motivation for potential recipients is explored, challenged and their individual needs are identified. At interview potential recipients are interviewed about their work history, eligibility criteria as well as any other relevant issues such as whether they have a driving license.

Recipients complete pre-course information providing details of any current job role, health issues, learning disabilities, information about their prior experience relevant to the course and whether there's anything they want to learn. Pertinent information is shared with the Trainer who takes learners through their induction session and training programme.

IAG is embedded throughout each training programme and Trainers liaise with leaders to provide relevant IAG about follow on courses, signposting to other training providers, if appropriate, and to support work experience and job applications.

Leaders often work in partnership with Trainers and/or industry specialists to co-design new training programmes in response to local labour market needs. For example, at the time of assessment a local company specialising in providing wall and floor tiles, Ashton and Bromley Ceramics, was working closely with the team at BTP Cumbria to develop a Skills Bootcamp to train new tilers for their own company and the wider community.

Recipients confirmed that courses were not only “as described”, but in many cases “better” than described and recipients appreciated the practical approach of their Trainers and Assessors.

“It was not what I expected, but in every respect it's been better.”

“When they've explained stuff, it's been really clear. I knew what to expect and what was required before I started.”

“The approach was quite different and I found I've used different parts of my brain that I haven't used.”

At the beginning of each course learners are provided with a detailed overview of the programme and the timescales involved. They are also introduced to specialist Trainers such as the staff from Ecological Building Systems and Eden Hot Lime who helped deliver the Retrofitting Old Buildings Skills Bootcamp.

Each course benefits from an Induction Checklist that covers essential topics such as emergency procedures, equal opportunities, prevent, consent for photographs and social media posts as well as introductions, GDPR, health and safety and IAG. There is a detailed Induction Pack for NVQ training programmes describing the roles of different team members, assessment methods, the types of evidence that can be

provided, equal opportunities, the appeals procedure as well as a description of IAG support available.

Given the nature of the industry health and safety is a top priority in all training programmes, including the use of PPE and an awareness of hazardous substances. Trainers emphasise the importance of undertaking risk assessments for all jobs - a key element that has resonated with Skills Bootcamp participants.

Specialist Trainers, with relevant industry experience, embed IAG throughout their training programmes and provide IAG as part of the assessment and feedback process. Specialist information, links, resources, up to date product samples such as new 'green' insulation products and IAG about working in different sectors within the construction industry adds value to the learners' experience and employers join Skills Bootcamps to talk about work placements and job opportunities. At interview Trainers emphasised the importance of engaging with the experienced, adult learners on more advanced programmes – encouraging them to share their own experience and IAG with their peers as part of the learning experience.

In line with the Learner Support Policy, support for learners and IAG is tailored to the needs of the individual. Recipients clearly valued the IAG and support provided by team members.

“They go over and above.”

“I've really appreciated their support and guidance.”

“It's much better than college – the tutors are much clearer. You can see they know what they're talking about.”

“You learn more with them than going with another training provider - they're really thorough.”

On Skills Bootcamps is at the end of each topic learners are asked to reflect on their learning/ At the end of each Bootcamp Trainers provide feedback and assessing progress against each learning objective. Verbal feedback and IAG is also provided to recipients to support and motivate less confident recipients as well as those new to the industry. For longer programmes Assessors organise regular sessions to review progress and provide IAG which is very much appreciated by recipients.

“The Assessors visit you, observe you – I felt really comfortable talking to them.”

“I can't really fault them.”

During and towards the end of their training programmes recipients are provided with information to support their next steps. For example, leaders work hard to facilitate work placements, work experience opportunities and to support progression into employment for unemployed recipients attending Skills Bootcamps. For example, working with the Council's Conservation Officer to identify work placement opportunities or to work with specialist trades people in the area to gain useful work experience. This tailored approach and IAG to support recipients is very much appreciated.

“They've been very flexible about doing work placements. You can work at different companies if you want to.”

“I feel confident now about going to my work placement.”

“Some of us have already been offered more work and even jobs.”

For some recipients who are keen to gain experience and move into self-employment leaders refer them to Enterprise Cumbria. Trainers also talk with learners about potential future training programmes such as leadership qualifications available through Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) as well as important registrations with professional bodies.

Different team members are responsible for maintaining overall planning tools and learner progress records. Training programmes are planned months in advance and live records of learner registrations are maintained on whiteboards in the team office. For contracts, such as the Skills Bootcamps, team members keep detailed spreadsheet records of learner registration, progress, retention and progression in line with funders requirements.

The difference the IAG makes to recipients and the overall impact

The progress of individual recipients is monitored and assessed in different ways. Trainers provide IAG to support recipient's progress in a timely manner. Team members also monitor progress and follow up on their learning outcomes at the end of the training programme. The team compare the information provided in the pre-course form with the actual learning outcomes as well as the unexpected benefits of attending the course.

Recipients have confirmed how the IAG and support provided has not only helped them progress through their courses but also has helped them to gain confidence and a self-belief that they “can do” it.

The admissions and IAG policy clearly articulates up to the planned outcomes for learners resulting from IAG services. These include.

- “To know more about their strengths and areas for development
- To know more about the options available to them
- To be able to make better decisions
- To feel more confident about their learning
- To be able to plan their next steps
- To do all of their employability skills.”

Feedback from learners confirms that these planned outcomes are consistently achieved and in an appropriate, accessible manner pertinent to the type of recipient and level of training programme. In many cases the most important outcomes were achieving the required qualification for the industry or successfully completing the refresher course that enables them to “get their ticket.”

“The best bit for me has been getting the qualification – you've got to have it to do the job.”

The team are clear that without accurate, timely and quality IAG recipients would not be recruited to the right programme, retained on programme or achieve the results they do regardless of the level of training programme. They team achieves consistently good results with a range of recipients and it is clear that quality, current and applied IAG is an integral part of the organisation’s success.

To monitor the effectiveness of their training programmes and IAG provision the team hold weekly meetings. Open and transparent communication is facilitated through the live planning information displayed on the whiteboards such as the number of places left on each forthcoming training programme.

BTP Cumbria continuously strives to improve its performance and develops innovative programmes to support local business. The team achieves over 95% success rate on short courses and on NVQ programmes. The team are particularly successful and not only running Skills Bootcamps but also helping participants to secure employment. For example, out of the four Skills Bootcamps for Ground workers run in 2024 all but one learner based in North Cumbria secured employment. Their performance against target for the current Skills Bootcamps contract, which started in July 2024, is on target with 32 participants and 18 job outcomes achieved to date. The overall target number is 50 and three other Skills Bootcamps are already scheduled to run before the end of March 2025.

The team are effective in helping progress Level 2 learners into employment – this success is supported by the network of employer partners and their reputation as good training providers. As one partner said, "People understand that any learner coming from BTP is partly vetted and well trained."

BTP Cumbria collect feedback from learners about their experience and progress on all training programmes. They monitor response rates and the quality of information obtained across different training programmes. To enhance the quantity and quality of feedback captured and to raise response rates from 43% to 90% the team have stopped using online questionnaires accessed via a QR code. Rather they are investing face to face time with learners at the end of their training programmes to capture written feedback and to hold informal focus groups. The team document and act on feedback received to inform future improvements. They also create case studies to highlight learner success and to inspire future learners.

Leaders carry out observations and shadow new Trainers. They also carry out unannounced visits to monitor established trainers to review the quality of training, assessing and IAG. As part of their approach to continuous improvement leaders work closely with Trainers and specialist providers to plan and review training programmes. This approach is built into the team’s way of working and leads to continuous development of training programmes and their content.

Associate Trainers very much appreciate the team’s practical approach and way of working. For example, one Associate Trainer commented, "I like the fact they're always on the hunt to find a better way of doing things." Associate Trainers

consistently commented on the strength of their working relationship with BTP Cumbria, the team's collaborative approach and mutual respect.

The team carry out regular self-assessments and implement improvement action plans. Current improvements underway include improving instructor's teaching skills, enhancing how learning outcomes are assessed, ensuring the timely achievement of NVQs for all learners and ensuring that guided learning hours on short courses are consistently achieved.

Team members benefit from annual appraisals and consistently feel that they are well supported. Leaders encourage new members of the team to shadow of the team members as well as Associate Trainers to get a detailed understanding of the nature of their work. They also encourage team members to undertake continuous professional development. For example, the newest member of the team is enrolled as an apprentice in Business Administration at Carlisle College and is actively involved in improving the feedback mechanisms as part of their project work.

What is working particularly well

A number of strengths/areas that are working particularly well were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- (1.1) BTP Cumbria comprise a dedicated team, committed to delivering quality experiences for their funders, employer partners and recipients including IAG. Their practical approach ensures that recipients get effective IAG at all stages of their learning journey.
- (2.6) Leaders proactively recruit specialist experts to support their training programmes who are currently active in the construction industry. These experts provide up-to-date, relevant IAG about working in the industry and provide IAG pertinent to the recipients' aspirations and career goals. For example, such experts add value to their training sessions by describing real life situations from their own experience and so improve the quality of IAG provided to recipients.
- (2.7) Leaders are effective at forming and developing positive relationships with local employers. Strong, mutually beneficial relationships together with good quality training and IAG leads to repeat business and long-term relationships with local employers, including multiple local authorities and industry specialists. Such relationships also lead to the co-production of bespoke, tailored solutions for local employers harnessing their specialist expert knowledge and experience.
- (3.2) BTP Cumbria should continue to make the most of promotional opportunities to help reach potential recipients and partners. The organisation is working hard to continue to raise their profile and to illustrate the impact of their work on recipients which is noted and appreciated by their partners. Such efforts include the increased use of social media, different promotional

channels and case studies. This promotional work should be encouraged as well as building on existing networking and partnership work to ensure that other employers and training providers are aware of BTP Cumbria's flexible and innovative approach to meeting the needs of local industry and recipients. For example, the organisation's work with the floor and tiling company which is underway could prove an excellent case study of partnership working, collaboration and bespoke vocational training programmes co-designed with industry leaders.

- (4.1) Detailed IAG is provided to employers and recipients to help them understand the nature of the training courses and appropriate eligibility criteria as well as potential next steps. Team members invest time in recipients to get to know them, understand their needs and aspirations as well as to assess their level of motivation to progress with their training programme and within the construction industry. Team members are confident to challenge, support and direct customers to make informed choices about the training that is right for them at this time. This commitment and practical approach to IAG greatly helps the retention and achievement rates for recipients. It also helps provide employers with enhanced levels of confidence in offering work placements, work experience and/or job opportunities to successful recipients.

Development suggestions

Development suggestions are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and development suggestions. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- (1.4) Staff and recipients consistently commented that they feel safe and well supported. They welcome the informal atmosphere created by the team. Health & Safety is naturally a top priority for recipients (and staff and associates) at BTP Cumbria. Some resources concerning health and wellbeing are provided for some recipients although the team may like to consider how recipients could benefit from additional resources could be shared as reference materials and potentially to support their own health and well-being. For example, the inclusion of links, articles and QR codes as part of the new Newsletter may prove useful. Resources could be shared as part of social media posts to support calendar events such as World Mental Health Day and the use of tools such as [Padlet](#) could help promote and share appropriate resources with different learner groups. The use of such tools

would help raise awareness of sources of information and support for health and wellbeing amongst recipients and staff. It would also help to encourage open discussions about mental health and wellbeing amongst recipient groups.

- (2.3) Given the introduction of the new matrix standards since BTP Cumbria's previous assessment It may be timely to review the IAG policy. This would help clarify and make more concrete who does what withing the team at each stage of the learner journey. It would also clarify how each stage is monitored, evaluated and quality assured and by whom. This will help make more concrete what is expected of each team member, including Trainers, Assessors and industry experts. The revised policy should help to reinforce the Trainer's and Assessor's roles and responsibilities in providing IAG during the training programme. Such a policy review will also help reinforce roles and responsibilities of other team members and employees in the delivery and the monitoring and evaluation of IAG.
- (2.5) Leaders may find it useful to harness expertise of some team members and Associate trainers to share and establish good practice in providing quality IAG. This could be shared with the distributed team of Associate Trainers and with office team members using short training videos, perhaps starting with sharing the revised IAG policy. For those employees involved in delivering IAG the team should consider attaining suitable qualifications to underpin their role and responsibility in IAG services and help facilitate a shared understanding of what is IAG and its different forms throughout the learner journey.
- (3.1) The team is experienced and successful in developing and/or co-designing bespoke training programmes. However, a common message from different internal and external stakeholders is that BTP Cumbria should actively promote more about what they do, including the training and IAG on offer to both recipients and to employers. The team could consider including a separate section on the website about the IAG services available to support learners (and employers) throughout their journey – this could perhaps be summarized as a flowchart. As part of reviewing this promotional activity, the team might like to consider if the IAG to local employers who are unsure of appropriate courses, funding and the options available to them to develop their workforce could be formalized as part of the service offer. Given the existing relationships with employers there may be more formal opportunities to develop the IAG offered directly to businesses, including an initial diagnostic service and IAG to formulate career progression routes. Such IAG for employers may be facilitated in collaboration with existing specialist Associate Trainers and may involve further collaboration with and signposting to other training providers to create a holistic, one stop shop for employers in the construction industry.
- (4.6) Regular reviews are undertaken with recipients to assess their progress on training programmes. For example, at the end of each topic recipients

receive feedback on Skills Bootcamps. More opportunities should be taken up to capture the tailored IAG provided by Trainers to recipients. For example, at the end of each topic the Trainer completes an assessment checklist and feedback is provided a separate box on this assessment. This existing feedback sheet could include another box specifically to record any IAG provided and could be used to give examples of how skills can be used in the workplace or as a record of things discussed with the learner (tailored to that individual). The lack of documentation concerning IAG delivered seems to undervalue the services provided by team members.

- (5.2) Recipients value the training and IAG provided by the team. Given the organisation's client group, including some recipients at some distance from the labour market, it would be useful to introduce a simple tool as part of gathering feedback from the learners that can demonstrate the distance travelled by learners both against clear learning objectives and soft skills such as confidence. This is particularly true of Skills Bootcamp recipients and introducing better tools would more accurately evidence the impact of the team at BTP Cumbria.

Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. During the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
5. Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the **matrix** Standard at least 3 months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 3 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.
6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: matrixStandard@growthco.uk.
7. Inform The Growth Company immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
8. Inform The Growth Company of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Company and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
10. Only use the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines. For example, if a certain department is successfully **matrix** accredited, the Quality Mark can only be used on that department's letterhead or on that department's page on their internet homepage.
11. Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for accreditation review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by The Growth Company and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
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