

# Pilot arrangements and guidance for the Quality Improvement Planning Scrutiny Visits for training provider organisations in 2025-26

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Education and  
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Empowering Improvement

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## Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has been commissioned by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to carry out a scrutiny evaluation of quality improvement planning in training provider organisations. A small sample of organisations has been selected for inclusion by DfE Quality Improvement Team (QIT) in a revised\* quality improvement planning scrutiny process for 2025-26.

The revised process includes a two-day Scrutiny Visit to each organisation. The purpose of the Scrutiny Visit will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the organisation's quality improvement planning processes. The organisation's most recent quality improvement plan will be the focus of the visit.

The remainder of this document sets out how the ETI will carry out the Quality Improvement Planning Scrutiny Visit.

\*The revised process was piloted in 2024/25 and will continue to be piloted in 2025/26. Scrutiny visits in 2025/26 will last up to two days rather than one, as in 2024/25.

## The Quality Improvement Planning Scrutiny Visit

The purpose of the Quality Improvement Planning Scrutiny Visit will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the organisation's quality improvement planning processes. The most recent quality improvement plan and associated documents will be the focus of the visit.

The guiding principles that underpin an effective quality improvement planning process are outlined below. These principles will be central to ETI's evaluation of the effectiveness of an organisation's quality improvement planning process.

## Guiding principles

The guiding principles aim to provide organisations with clear, shared and adaptable guidance to underpin the purpose and key objectives of the quality improvement planning process. They are designed to empower a culture of critical reflection, well-targeted professional development, and continuous improvement in the quality of provision in individual organisations and, across the network of training provider organisations. By incorporating key principles such as self-evaluation, data-informed insights, and stakeholder engagement, the quality improvement planning process will help maintain a productive and effective improvement process with well-defined priorities and actionable goals, leading to measurable and impactful outcomes.

The guiding principles include:

- the quality improvement planning process fosters an enabling culture of critical self-reflection and impactful professional learning and development;
- the quality improvement planning process is integral to informing, setting and achieving an organisation's vision, in line with the DfE's economic vision and associated strategic priorities;
- well-defined quality monitoring, evaluation and reporting structures, including lines of responsibility at all levels, are in place to support effective quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality improvement planning process is responsive and progressive, builds on existing key strengths and prioritises and effects improvement, where required;
- the self-evaluation processes are robust, reliable and evidence-based, and used judiciously to affirm key strengths in an organisation's education and training provision and identify areas where action is necessary to effect improvement;
- the views of learners, staff and other key stakeholders are taken account of within the quality improvement planning process;
- reliable quantitative data is used robustly to report on key performance measures, and inform improvement action planning and evaluation of its impact on the quality of the organisation's education and training provision;
- robust, well-targeted improvement action planning, with measurable targets which are monitored and evaluated systematically, underpin the quality improvement process;
- the quality improvement process empowers improvement at and across all levels within the organisation, and beyond, to ensure that all learners are provided with: a well-designed, fit-for-purpose curriculum; high-quality learning experiences; and, are well-supported to thrive, achieve and progress; and
- learner and staff health, wellbeing and safety, including the arrangements for child protection and/or adult safeguarding, and wider safeguarding, are central to and explicit within an organisation's quality improvement process.

## Additional notes

- Organisations may use an existing external self-evaluation framework to support their quality improvement process or their own internal framework.
- Accurate quantitative and qualitative data on learner retention, achievement and progression should be used and presented to support the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- The quality improvement planning process and associated documentation and outcomes must have the approval of the organisation's governing body or management committee.

## Scrutiny Visit arrangements

### Notification

A member of the ETI Inspection Services Team will contact the organisation by telephone to provide notification of the planned Scrutiny Visit.

Following the notification of the visit, the Reporting Inspector (RI) will contact the organisation by telephone to inform them of the arrangements for the visit. This will include details on the timing of the visit, team members\*, evaluation activities and the arrangements for reporting back key findings. The organisation will not need to prepare any additional documentation in advance of the Scrutiny Visit: only the most relevant high-level existing documents and information should be provided.

\*Team members will normally comprise: a RI and an associate assessor (AA).

### Scrutiny Visit activities

The responsibility lies with the organisation to ensure that the RI is directed to, or provided with, the most pertinent sources of evidence. Evaluation activities may include:

- a short, contextualised overview on the ongoing work around the quality improvement planning process;
- meetings with relevant leaders and managers and key stakeholders to evidence the impact of quality improvement planning processes in bringing about improvement;

- session observation(s) and a focus group meeting with learners;
- an overview of the organisation's progress in setting well-defined priorities, planning actionable goals, and achieving measurable and impactful outcomes; and
- short oral feedback to senior managers and a representative from the governing body or management committee at the end of day 2. A representative from the DfE QIT will also attend the feedback.

## What happens after a Scrutiny Visit?

The RI will provide the organisation and DfE QIT with a copy of a short written report, setting out the key findings and any areas for action arising from the Scrutiny Visit, and one of the following conclusions, as outlined below:

- A.** The organisation has implemented effective quality improvement planning strategies which are leading to improvement in the quality of the provision, including...**[key features]**. The Scrutiny Visit also identified areas for action which the organisation has capacity to take forward.

The ETI, through the engagement of the District Inspector, will continue to monitor the organisation's progress in bringing about improvement.

- B.** The organisation provided insufficient evidence of effective quality improvement planning strategies to bring about improvement in the quality of the provision. Areas for action include: **[for example setting well-defined priorities, planning and implementing actionable targets, and achieving measurable and impactful outcomes]**.


**[organisation name]** needs to review, update and resubmit its quality improvement plan for 2025-26 in line with the areas for action. The Department for the Economy will inform the organisation of the next steps.

On completion of ETI's Scrutiny Visit to an organisation, the DfE QIT will then write to chair of the governing body or management board setting out the next steps, particularly in relation to arrangements for re-submission of an updated quality improvement plan, if required.

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