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His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by East Kilbride and District Group Training Association Ltd (EKGTA)

A report by HM Inspectors

04/08/2026

CEO/Principal	David Bell
External review date	26 May 2026
Provider type	Independent Training Provider
Lead HMI	Stephen McGregor
Apprentice numbers	462

1. Background

External inspections of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) providers are planned collaboratively between the provider and HM Inspectors. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provide information regarding provider performance including key data to support this process.

During the inspection, a team of HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of training provision and the experiences of apprentices and key stakeholders such as employers. During the visit, the team met with staff, learners, employers and other stakeholders and explored the quality of training delivery, how well the needs of apprentices are met, and the approaches to improving quality of provision.

This report summarises the findings from the visit, awards grades for the three elements and highlights areas of positive practice, areas for development, and any associated main points for action. The report will be shared with the provider, Scottish Government and SDS. For colleges, the report will be shared with the Scottish Funding Council. An accompanying report will be published on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in Scotland website.

2. The provider and its context

East Kilbride and District Group Training Association (EKGTA) is a registered charity and an employer member-led independent training provider, established in 1966 and based at a single training centre in East Kilbride.

EKGTA currently supports 462 MAs across 123 employers, ranging from small and medium-sized enterprises to large multinational and public sector organisations. EKGTA is predominantly focused on the delivery of apprenticeships in the engineering sector.

3. Outcome of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

Leadership and Management	Very good
Delivery of training	Good
Progress and Outcomes	Very good

4. Summary of inspection findings

A summary of the findings of HM Inspectors are set out below.

Element 1: Leadership and Management - Very Good

QI 9.1 Influential vision, values and aims

Areas of positive progress

- EKGTA convey a clear vision for 'Developing Tomorrow's Engineers Today' based on a strong commitment to deliver relevant and high-quality industry training. This ensures delivery remains relevant, practical, and directly linked to the engineering sector.
- Senior leaders ensure that operational and strategic planning arrangements take good account of regular engagement with employers. This ensures that apprenticeship provision is responsive to regional and national needs.
- Senior leaders, supported by a trustee board of employer representatives, work well to ensure that provision is aligned closely to workforce development requirements across the engineering sectors.
- The trustee board makes effective use of regular reports on recruitment trends, areas of growth, and employer and community partnership opportunities, to inform decisions about the direction and scale of apprenticeship provision.
- Leaders promote a clear commitment to meeting the needs of apprentices and employers. All staff demonstrate a strong focus on developing competent apprentices, maintaining positive relationships with employers, and ensuring apprentices are supported well throughout their programme.



- Senior leaders work with employers to ensure that the structure and content of MA programmes provide apprentices with the skills to contribute productively within the workplace.
- EKGTA leaders and staff take an active role in contributing to developments within the engineering sector at regional and national levels. For example, contributing to a recent SDS Employer Involvement Community of Practice.
- EKGTA advisors promote the MA programme well across employer organisations to raise the profile of the programmes and visit schools to promote careers in engineering. All advisors contribute positively to school careers events. This supports with the recruitment of apprentices.
- Advisors make good use of quick response (QR) code tracking to monitor website traffic and enquiries and to strengthen targeting and recruitment of underrepresented group. This includes promoting career opportunities in engineering to females.

Areas for development

- None identified.

QI 9.4 Leadership for innovation and change

Areas of positive progress

- The trustee board works well with senior leaders to ensure strategic decisions are informed by current industry practices and emerging developments within the engineering sectors. For example, the defence, marine and energy sectors have been identified for future apprenticeship provision.
- Senior leadership draws productively on engagement with employer members to ensure MA programmes are flexible, relevant to business and industry needs, and are aligned well to workforce priorities and developments.
- A significant period of planned investment over the last four years is resulting in EKGTA delivering apprenticeship provision that is addressing regional and national skills shortages.
- Senior leaders support staff well to engage in professional development to ensure learning, teaching and assessment practices remain current and in line with sector expectations and industry standards.
- Leaders, engineering skills coaches and advisors introduce apprentices to the concept of meta skills effectively at the start of their programme. Staff support apprentices well to reflect on how they have developed and applied these skills during progress reviews, and on completion of their MA programme.

Areas for development

- None identified.

QI 9.5 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training

Areas of positive progress

- Leaders regularly host team meetings and support staff well to contribute to quality assurance arrangements. Engineering skills coaches engage constructively in team-based self-evaluation arrangements to identify actions for improvement and enhancement.
- Leaders use the 'Truck project' effectively to showcase apprentices' competencies and success to employers. This raises the profile of engineering apprenticeships and strengthens engagement with employers and prospective learners.
- Senior leaders encourage advisors to ensure apprentices and employers select appropriate optional units to best meet workplace requirements and the individual aspirations of apprentices.
- All staff comply with awarding body quality assurance standards and verification requirements. This ensures that assessment decisions are fair and is providing employers and apprentices with confidence in the quality of training provision.

Areas for development

- Self-evaluation and action planning arrangements are not sufficiently formal or robust. The views and experiences of staff, employers and apprentices are not sufficiently or systematically considered when action-planning for improvement.

Element 2 Delivery of training - Good

QI 5.1 Design and delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- Leaders engage with employers productively to influence the design and delivery of the apprenticeship programme. As a result, programmes meet the needs of employers well and almost all employers are satisfied with the quality of provision and learning approaches applied by staff in line with sector needs.
- EKGTA staff deliver bespoke units and additional training for apprentices to meet individual and employer needs. This supports apprentices well to develop skills, competencies and career progression.
- Staff make good use of a wide range of online and digital platforms to provide apprentices

with resources to assist planning learning and engaging in self-directed study. They make good use of digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams (MST) to enhance the delivery of learning and teaching.

- All employers are aware that candidates can complete their programme at their own pace. Some apprentices benefit from being able to complete their programme early which enables them to progress quickly in their workplace and take advantage of new employment opportunities.
- Most staff plan activities well to ensure that apprentices receive timely and effective feedback on their progress. Advisors visit apprentices regularly in the workplace to capture and reflect on apprentices' progress. They discuss apprentices' future work with employers, which supports the collection of evidence as apprentices progress through the MA programme.
- Almost all apprentices report that both on and off-the-job training activities are well-structured and relevant to industry practice, and that learning activities widen their professional knowledge and increase their technical skills.
- The MA programme is designed effectively to provide an integrated model of on-the-job learning and off-the-job training. EKGTA staff deliver a wide range of relevant and meaningful MA pathways that enable almost all apprentices to gain relevant skills, competencies and employment.

Areas for development

- During year one of the apprenticeship programme insufficient collaboration between workshop and academy staff is limiting opportunities to provide a more holistic approach to delivery of learning and teaching, and assessment.
- Academy staff do not engage sufficiently in self-evaluation of learning and teaching to reflect fully on the impact of delivery or plan for improvement.

QI 5.4 Effectiveness of training

Areas of positive progress

- Strong and on-ongoing collaboration between EKGTA staff, employers and their apprentices help to ensure that the programme provides a skilled workforce that meets industry needs. Most employers meet with advisors to confirm progress, discuss challenges, set actions and plan for progression.
- All staff have good levels of experience and qualifications in delivering apprenticeship programmes. They have high levels of subject knowledge and expertise, and apprentices benefit from staff having sound knowledge of the industry. This provides apprentices with useful advice on their learning, skills development, and progression.

- Employer mentors provide apprentices with high quality training in the workplace. They apply their professional knowledge and skills well to support apprentices to become fully competent in their work role.
- Almost all apprentices are supported well by EKGTA staff to reflect on the range of meta skills developed in the workshop environment. Apprentices can articulate clearly their development of each meta skill and draw well on this to complete a final reflective assessment at the end of their programme.
- Almost all advisors set appropriate milestones and targets for apprentices to complete tasks in preparation for their next review. They engage well with employers to ensure that apprentices are given appropriate training and opportunities to develop their skills prior to their next assessment.
- Almost all apprentices use e-portfolios well to monitor and track progression and upload evidence from their day-to-day work for their progression reviews. This enables apprentices to independently review their development and supports them to plan and manage their learning more effectively.
- Support arrangements, including additional time, the use of coloured materials to support dyslexic learners, or access to video-based lesson recordings are enabling most apprentices to access learning in ways that suit their individual needs. These arrangements are enhancing engagement, improving understanding, and supporting progression and achievement.
- Staff make good use of internal and SDS recording tools to identify the additional support needs of apprentices at recruitment, interview and induction stages. This allows for the appropriate planning of support.
- Almost all apprentices value their experiences on the programme and the approaches applied by training staff to engage them in learning activities. They report EKGTA workshop activities provide them with technical skills that are highly relevant to the workplace environment.
- Staff make effective use of formal progress reviews to encourage apprentices to reflect on progress and planning of their next steps. They invite employers to attend these meetings to support goal setting. Formal and informal communication between advisors and apprentices' line managers is effective.

Areas for development

- Most apprentices find the theory-based subjects in the Academy overly prescriptive, outdated and not sufficiently engaging.
- The use of assistive technologies is underdeveloped. This is limiting support for learners who may benefit from these resources to engage in learning and assessment activities.

QI 8.1 Reflection on provision to improve training

Areas of positive progress

- Workshop staff meet formally to discuss apprentices' progression and areas for improvement and use regular standardisation meetings well to ensure delivery meets framework requirements.
- Newly appointed workshop staff undertake Excellence, Achievement and Learning (EAL) statutory quality assurance observation procedures, to help to ensure consistency in the quality of delivery. New engineering skills coaches receive a comprehensive induction, benefit from working closely with a mentor, and shadow more experienced skills coaches. This promotes a standardised approach to the delivery of programmes.
- Staff have revised the apprentice induction programme to make it more engaging. A week of intensive information has been replaced with a well-structured one-day introduction followed by incremental delivery over a four-week period on areas including health and safety, and IOSH Managing Safely. This has reduced information overload at the start of programmes and is more engaging for apprentices.
- Apprentice recruitment selection arrangements take good account of applicant needs, skills and aspirations. Some apprentices progress from a National Certificate (NC) in Engineering Systems to higher education where this aligns well with individual capability and employer requirements.
- During the initial 20-40-week programme and 13-week progress review meeting, staff encourage employer mentors to engage with training centre staff to monitor apprentice development. This collaboration supports effective tracking of progress and early identification of emerging support needs.

Areas for development

- Planning of self-evaluation activities does not provide sufficient opportunity for staff to work collaboratively to identify actions to improve the quality of delivery and assessment.

Element 3 Progress and Outcomes - Very Good

QI 1.1 Achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery

Areas of positive progress

- The overall rate of apprenticeship achievement for 16 to 19-year-olds in 2024 and 2025, were at 80.7% and 79.1%. These are significantly higher than the SDS 70% achievement target. National achievement rates for this age group were at 76% in 2024 and 79.8% in 2025.
- Almost all apprentices make effective use of SDS meta skills resources to identify areas of

strength and areas for development. They use this resource well to reflect on their progress and understand how these skills contribute to workplace performance and professional development.

- Almost all apprentice competency achievement is evidenced effectively through the e-portfolio. This is providing apprentices and employers with valuable real-time information that enables them to track performance and identify missing evidence.

Areas for development

- The overall rate of apprenticeship achievement for 20 years-old plus in 2024 and 2025, were at 60.7% and 76.5%. These were higher in 2025 and lower in 2024 than SDS 75% achievement target. National achievement rates for this age group were at 79.1% in 2024 and 82.2% in 2025.
- Recruitment for female apprentices, apprentices with disabilities and those that are care-experienced have been below SDS national average over the last two years.
- Recruitment of apprentices from an ethnic background has increased over the last three years. However, rates remain lower than SDS national average in 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- There are no arrangements within the Academy to capture meta skills development. This limits opportunities for apprentices to record and apply their development of meta skills across all aspects of their programme.

QI 2.1 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- Almost all apprentices progress to sustained, full-time employment or higher education upon successful completion of their apprenticeship programme.
- Most apprentices report consistently high levels of satisfaction with programme delivery and the support they receive. They highlight the effective structure of their programme, and accessibility of advisors, as being key to successful completion of their programme.
- Almost all apprentices report that participation in the MA programme increases their confidence in the workplace. They confirm that training provides them with the knowledge and skills required to perform their job roles effectively.
- Almost all employers report very high satisfaction with apprentice development, noting significant and sustained improvements in work-related performance throughout the programme and following programme completion.

Areas for development

- Leaders do not currently track the destination or progress of apprentices completing their programme.

5. Main points for action

The following main points for action are required:

- Leaders should ensure that self-evaluation and action-planning arrangements are applied consistently and rigorously across apprenticeship provision. Arrangements should take account of the views and experiences of all staff, apprentices and employers to support action-planning for improvement.

6. Examples of highly effective practice

- The project-based approach to showcasing apprentices' competencies, meta skills and success to employers. The project provides an opportunity for apprentices to apply a wide range of practical skills developed throughout their training, while also demonstrating key meta skills. These skills are aligned to the Meta Skills framework and are observed, assessed and tracked as part of the overall programme.
- Strong employer engagement, with the delivery of highly personalised and flexible MA programmes that take account of both apprentice's career aspirations and employer needs.

7. What happens next?

HM Inspectors are confident that the provider has the capacity to continue to improve and HMIE will make no further visits to the provider during this cycle as a result of this review.

Stephen McGregor
HM Inspector

Appendix 1 - Grades used in reporting

A common grading scale is used in making judgements for provider reviews:

- Grade 1 - EXCELLENT – Outstanding and sector leading
- Grade 2 - VERY GOOD – Major strengths
- Grade 3 - GOOD – Important strengths with some areas for improvement
- Grade 4 - SATISFACTORY – Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Grade 5 - WEAK – Important weaknesses
- Grade 6 - UNSATISFACTORY – Major weaknesses

Summary

- An evaluation of **excellent** applies to training which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high-levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
- An evaluation of **very good** applies to training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of training, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide training without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the provider will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of **good** applies to training characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of good represents a standard of training in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the provider should seek to improve further the areas of important strength but take action to address the areas for improvement.
- An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to training characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that apprentices' have access to a basic level of training. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the provider should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of **weak** applies to training which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either



individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish apprentices' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the provider.

- An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in training, requiring immediate remedial action. The training experience for apprentices is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for training evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the provider.

Appendix 2 Evaluative Terms

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.