

INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE (IAG) POLICY and BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

2023-24



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Please Note: A formal, full review of this document will take place on a 3-yearly basis. However, in the interim, the document will be updated as necessary to remain current with any statutory legislation and/or significant Government guidance updates on the subject.

CHANGE MECHANISM

Any person seeking to alter this document must consult the author before making any change.

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1. Aims and Objectives

L&F Training (L&F) is committed to providing a high-quality level of service to all its learners and service users. This document seeks to provide clear guidelines to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners within the organisation, with reference to best practice and strategies used to measure IAG, in accordance with the **Matrix** quality standard.

The aim of effective IAG is to promote the benefits of learning, help individuals to address and overcome any barriers to learning and support them in making realistic and well-informed choices.

This will be measured against the following critical success measures (KPIs):

- 100% of Learners are enrolled on the correct course first time. This will be achieved through good IAG to Learners directly.
- 85% IAG Satisfaction
- 80% Learner Retention
- 95% Pass rate of Apprenticeships of which 65% are timely

2. Introduction to IAG

IAG is a term which encompasses a broad range of activities and interventions, which enable learners or potential learners, to overcome barriers to learning and entering employment. The service facilitates access to accurate, objective and up-to-date information with regard to the labour market and other support and provision available. The service also provides a valuable support framework for learners currently in work, as they progress through their course. IAG refers to all information, advice and guidance sessions provided to learners, from initial assessment, through informal progression meetings and formal learner progress reviews, to end of course reviews and post course contacts. L&F's IAG service aims to be:

- **Impartial:** L&F's advisors will not just look at learning programmes delivered by L&F; they will help Learners look at what other providers are offering. They will be told how to find out more – perhaps given a phone number or website address (signposting).
- **Confidential:** Nothing from the discussion will be shared with anyone else, without the Learner's knowledge or permission (except when the advisor has a legal requirement to do so under GDPR or in response to request from a recognised authority e.g. Police or Home Office).
- **Fair:** Clients will be treated fairly and equally, in line with L&F's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- **Transparent:** Learners will be involved with agreeing a communication/action plan for their IAG journey. If, at any time, learners do not understand what is going on, they will be encouraged to ask their advisor (normally an L&F Teaching & Learning Mentor/TLM) who will provide further explanation and support.

3. DEFINITIONS

Information

Information is data/fact provision that is timely and accurate in nature, provided in a context to enhance understanding. It can be conveyed through different mediums including face-to-face contact — individual, in groups or classes — written or printed materials, telephone helplines, ICT software, websites and so on. This can include:

- Information Leaflets
- Guides and Knowledge handbooks pertinent to the course in which the learner is interested
- Funding eligibility details
- Contracts / service level agreements
- Learner learning agreements
- Employer learning agreements
- Procedures

Advice

Is a recommendation about the options available to an individual, which are not always based on fact, but on the experience and knowledge of the Advisor. Because it is not always, therefore, based on true/accurate information it can be incorrect or misguided. Examples of advice include:

- Assisting in someone's comprehension of and interpretation of information
- providing information and answers to questions

- clarifying misunderstandings
- advising on options or how to go about a given course of action

Guidance

Guidance is a way of leading and providing direction to someone and is usually carried out over a longer period of time (i.e. more than one IAG session). Guidance is normally provided by an advisor experienced in their field of expertise; providing an individual with advice on that subject. It is important for an advisor to understand the limits of their own knowledge and competence and when to refer a learner to other colleagues or agencies

Examples of Guidance include:

- A careers advisor working with an individual who is unclear about the various options open to them and unsure of what career they wish to pursue.
- The advisor using experience and knowledge to direct someone on the right path
- Helping the learner confront barriers to understanding, learning and progression
- The advisor empowering the learner to resolve issues and conflicts and to support them to develop new perspectives and solutions to problems and be able to better manage their lives and achieve their potential.
- The advisor working with a learner to Identify individual needs and provide signposting or referring those who may need more in-depth guidance and support.

Signposting

Signposting is giving the learner/client responsibility for contacting other organisations to help them resolve their problem/issue/query. Signposting is about empowering your learner to be proactive in identifying the solution that is best for them. Signposting is needed when:

- The Learner's requirements rest outside the advisor's subject area
- The advisor feels it would be beneficial to the learner's wellbeing and confidence to be actively involved in identifying the best options to meet their requirements.

Referrals

Referrals are when an advisor (normally the learner's TLM) makes contact with another colleague or an external organisation to:

- Make an appointment for the learner to meet with the colleague or external organisation, preparatory to handing them over as they will be best placed to meet the learner's needs.
- Obtain information from the colleague or external organisation to meet the needs of the client.
- Note: For a referral, the advisor takes at least partial responsibility for contacting other organisations and/or colleagues, when they are no longer able to help/support the learner themselves.

Referrals are needed when:

- The Learner's requirements rest outside the advisor's subject area
- The Learner falls outside the organisation's target client group (e.g. if they are interested in A-Levels; as L&F is an apprenticeship training provider).
- There is a conflict of interest in relation to the advisor and learner (e.g. they may be related or work together)
- A breakdown of trust between the advisor and learner, which means the advisor is no longer able to provide impartial IAG to the learner.

4. IAG - How to run an initial IAG session

The Importance of Actively listening and how to listen effectively

Active listening is vitally important to enable you to accurately receive and interpret the information and messages imparted to you. To listen effectively:

- Face the speaker and maintain eye contact
- Demonstrate your engagement with the conversation through your body language and gestures.
- Remain focused on what they are saying and taking it on board (don't be lured into thinking about what question you are going to say next and ignoring what they are saying now).
- Don't interrupt to impose solutions based on the little you have heard so far; you need to hear it all, to provide effective IAG.
- Wait for the learner/client to finish, before you ask any clarifying/funneling questions.
- Keep aware on their non-verbal communication as well as what they are saying.

Communication types

People communicate in several different ways simultaneously. So as well as listening to what a learner is saying, please keep aware of these other types of communication and make sure you are making effective use of these communication types too; during your meetings with learners/clients:

- Facial Expressions - including smiles, use of eyebrows etc., to show level of interest
- Gestures - Nodding, putting hands up, gesticulation
- Body language - The way you sit, lean forward, lean back (e.g. cross legs and arms, indicate withdrawal or a defensive barrier - if your learner is sitting like that try and help them feel more relaxed by using gentle tones and perhaps talking of a subject that interests them, before going on to the IAG topic).
- Eye Contact
- Awareness of personal space - don't crowd them; respect their personal space
- Appearance - a scruffy appearance can sometimes indicate someone is going through a hard time.

Identifying barriers and how to respond to them

It is important to identify before or during your first session with a learner/client, of any barriers they may have to enable them to fully participate in the IAG sessions(s). The type of barriers that may be experienced include:

- Language barriers - It is best to know before your appointment if this is the case, so that you can arrange an interpreter and/or literature in the language of their choice; if that is what they need.
- Technology barriers - Keep materials in other formats, so that if the learner is unable to access on-line resources, you will be able to offer an alternative.
- Mobility and Accessibility barriers - Work with learners/clients, to do all reasonably practicable to accommodate them if you are having a physical face to face meeting and/or to meet whatever requirements they have (ask them!) to enable them to participate in the session(s).
- Cultural barriers - Always ask (don't be afraid to do so) and check your understanding, to ensure the individual's culture is respected, whilst still enabling the advisor to deliver effective IAG.

Adapting to the needs of the learner/keeping in mind equality, diversity and inclusion best practice

- At the beginning of your first session with the learner, do not be afraid to ask them if they need any help or additional resources to enable them to fully participate in the IAG session(s).
- Let the learner have a say in the assistance provided e.g. If they are deaf or hard of hearing do not just assume that they will need a British Sign language interpreter; instead ask them what they need/want. They may ask for a lip speaker or note taker; or just to go ahead and meet with you, one on one; but need a longer appointment to meet their needs.
- If a learner needs additional resources (a note taker, an interpreter, hard copy resources provided in their first language), please remember that is completely acceptable to re-arrange your meeting, so that you can get what they need in place for the session.
- It is also important to be open to any reasonable adjustments they require because of their culture or religion. For example: they may be uncomfortable with direct eye contact (their culture may see direct eye contact as a sign of aggression) or they may want to bring a chaperone with them to the meeting.

Follow these steps to ensure a successful Initial IAG session.

- a) Prepare for the Initial IAG session by getting ready to use the initial IAG Jot Form to record your meeting with the learner:
<https://eu.jotform.com/assign/231712925028049/232073982819061>
- b) Carry out an initial question session to determine if there are any barriers to them engaging with the IAG session, or any additional requirements they have to enable them to fully participate (NB: This initial question session could be done prior to your face to face/online meeting).
- c) The initial questions should also identify the subject for IAG (e.g. if they are considering signing up to a specific course).
- d) Based on their response ask further questions to drill down on the reasons they want to do that course; to find out more about them and their interests and their eligibility. Watch their non-verbal communication methods, as well as actively listening to their responses; to give you a clear understanding of what they are saying/communicating to you.
- e) Provide initial advice and options based on their responses to the further questions and give them time to consider these and ask you questions about them.
- f) Discuss the options/advice with the client and ask further questions, depending on their responses and reactions. Remember at this stage, you are still getting to know them; so, your initial understanding of their interests may change completely during this period.
- g) Agree an action plan, as appropriate, with the learner (e.g. have you provided signposting? If so, a follow up session may be needed, to discuss their findings etc.

- h) Depending on the actions agreed, schedule a follow up meeting. If no further Follow-Up IAG is needed at this stage (i.e. it has been agreed that the original course in which they expressed an interest; is suitable for them); then make sure you record the next steps.
- i) Ensure both you and the learner/client sign the completed Jot Form

5. IAG How to run a follow up IAG session

- a) Prepare for the follow up IAG session by getting ready to use the follow up IAG Jot Forum to record your meeting with the learner:
<https://eu.jotform.com/assign/231712852811351/232073268362051>
- b) Check to see if the learner/client has any additional requirements to enable them to participate in the IAG session (have their been any changes to their situation; or any new barriers, since you last met with them?)
- c) Review the actions agreed from the initial IAG and discuss.
- d) Follow Steps (d) to (i) as per section 4 above.
- e) Repeat these steps as many times as needed for the learner/client (i.e. you can have as many IAG sessions with the learner/client as you and they feel are necessary to meet their needs).
- f) Don't forget to consider signposting or referrals if they are appropriate to meet the Learner's needs.

6. IAG How to run an exit IAG Session

- a) Prepare for the follow up IAG session by getting ready to use the follow up IAG Jot Forum to record your meeting with the learner:
<https://eu.jotform.com/assign/231713352417046/232074450981052>
- b) Check to see if the learner/client has any additional requirements to enable them to participate in this last IAG session (have their been any changes to their situation; or any new barriers, since you last met with them?)
- c) Review their course; ask them for their thoughts and ideas about the future. Practice active listening to their responses and watch their non-verbal communication as well; so that you can gain a clear understanding.
- d) Based on the information they provide in this conversation, provide further information, advice and guidance, including signposting and referrals as appropriate.
- e) Give the learner/client the opportunity to discuss the IAG offered and to ask questions.
- f) If appropriate, agree a final action plan and associated communication method (as this is the learner's exit IAG session).
- g) Ensure both you and the learner/client sign the completed Jot Form.

7. How to carry out a Referral with a learner/client

- a) Recognise the need to make a referral. This could be for one of the following reasons, or for another reason:
 - The learner's needs are beyond your capabilities to deal with.
 - A colleague would be better placed to work with the learner to meet their needs
 - The Learner has needs that cannot be met by the organisation, so they need to be referred to an external organisation.
- b) Discuss the referral with the learner; to obtain their agreement that a referral is required.
- c) Agree with the learner the type of referral required e.g. to a colleague or to an external organisation and whether this will be for external organisation input into the learner's needs, or to arrange a full hand over of the learner to the external organisation
 - An example of the latter could be where a learner approach L&F to sign up to an apprenticeship, but that during the initial IAG session it was determined that the learner actually would be best suited and wanted to go to full time college to study A-Levels. L&F could, in such a case, identify a college, make an initial introduction and arrange for the learner to meet with college staff and then to arrange a full handover of the learner to that college.
 - An example of the former would be similar to signposting; but the advisor will be the one to make contact with the external organisation, to obtain the information to feed back to the learner during the next IAG session.
- d) Advisor (normally TLM) will speak with the colleague of referral organisation and discuss/agree confidentiality and GDPR requirements. Once these are agreed the Advisor will discuss the learner's requirements and will either:
 - Obtain the information required from the external organisation; or make the introduction/arrange for the learner to meet with the external organisation's representative.
- e) Advisor will feed back to the learner and discuss the information provided by the external organisation. If this meets the learner's needs, then the IAG session and final agreed actions will be finalised.
- f) If further actions are required (including if needed a follow up referral); an action plan and associated time line is agreed accordingly between the advisor and learner and a further follow up IAG session arranged.

8. GDPR and IAG

IAG must always be carried out with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 in mind. L&F has a commitment to store personal data securely and to only use that data for appropriate business reasons.

L&F stores personal data on a secure OneDrive, which is only accessible to senior managers of L&F. Others are granted short-term access on a business need basis only.

The contents of all IAG sessions are treated as confidential, and the information recorded during these sessions is only accessible to the advisor making the record; their Manager; the Director of Operations and the Data Protection Officer.

L&F has a GDPR Privacy Policy which is published on the L&F Website and includes the process for raising any GDPR related queries or concerns.

9. Quality Assurance and Evaluation

To ensure that high quality IAG is provided by the IAG advisors (normally TLMs); occasional observations of IAG sessions will take place and a sample of the Initial, Follow up and Exit IAG session reports will be regularly reviewed/audited by the Director of Operations, the Apprenticeship Manager and/or the Business Excellence Manager as appropriate.

Feedback from these reviews and audits will be passed to the relevant advisors/TLMs and any areas of improvement identified, which are more general (i.e. not advisor specific; but the recognition of an improvement required to the overarching IAG process, will be noted in the L&F Self-Assessment Review (SAR) document and associated Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

All improvements will be tracked to delivery, by the senior management team and Governance Board, as appropriate.

10. Associated Policies and Processes

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- GDPR Privacy Policy