



# The Aspiration Training Code of Governance

## Introduction

The Code has been written to support governance and Board practices at Aspiration Training, which will help the organisation work successfully towards meeting our vision, goals and strategy.

The Code sets out the governance themes and principles which Aspiration Training embrace and adopt in order to show that it is conducting its business in the best interest of its learners, employers, key stakeholders and funders.

There are a number of policies and documents in place to ensure the code of governance is fully implemented. These are listed in brackets throughout this document and set out fully in the appendix along with the person accountable for them.

## The Core Governance Values of Aspiration Training

In setting out its core values, the Code adopts and builds on the Seven (Nolan) Principles of Public Life which provide an ethical framework for the personal behaviour of Board members. Principles of Public Life are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability openness, honesty and leadership.

The Code is based on the following expectations of good governance, which illustrate the values and beliefs of Aspiration Training's directors and non-executive directors:

- Putting the learner and employer first.
- Promoting high expectations and ambitions for learners and staff.
- Listening to learners, employers and staff.
- Promoting inspirational training, teaching, learning and assessment.
- Creating a safe environment for learners to train, learn and develop.
- Providing strong strategic leadership and challenge to the senior team.
- Demonstrating accountability to all stakeholders, including publishing accurate and timely information on performance.
- Ensuring the achievement of equality of opportunity, and championing diversity, throughout the organisation.

The Code is set out in seven areas in line with the seven themes of good governance for the Independent Training Sector.

## **The Seven Themes of Good Governance for the Independent Training Sector**

To implement and embed the above values of providing a quality experience for learners, and meet the expectations of funders and regulators, those with a governance role (trustees, non-executives, directors, chief executive and senior leaders) will undertake the following:

### **Theme 1: Strategy and Leadership**

Formulate and agree the vision and strategy, including defining the ethos and policies of Aspiration Training.

### **Theme 2: Corporate Structures, Accountability and Roles**

Provide clarity between the governance Board, chief executive and management team.

### **Theme 3: Financial Strategy and Audit**

Adopt a financial strategy and funding plans which are compatible with the duty to ensure sustainability and solvency of Aspiration Training.

### **Theme 4: Teaching, Learning and Outcomes for Learners**

Ensure exceptional teaching, training and learning by adopting effective underpinning policies and systems, including the monitoring of performance data, which also encourage and facilitate the learner and employer voice.

### **Theme 5: Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding**

Meet, and aim to exceed, its statutory responsibilities to equality and diversity, and for ensuring that all learners are safe.

### **Theme 6: Transparency**

The Board will be transparent and openly accountable in order to demonstrate assurance that public funds are spent appropriately and efficiently.

### **Theme 7: Effective Governance**

Determine effective governance arrangements, regularly reviewing governance performance and effectiveness on a regular basis.

## Theme 1: Strategy and Leadership

Formulate and agree the vision and strategy, including defining the ethos and policies of Aspiration Training

- To be successful we must be led by an effective and entrepreneurial Board, whose function is to promote the long-term sustainable success of Aspiration Training.
- The Board establishes Aspiration Training's purpose, strategy and values, and satisfies itself that these are aligned with the organisation's culture.
- All Board members must work in the best interests of Aspiration Training, and act with integrity. They lead by example, and the workforce should be able to raise concerns in relation to management and colleagues where they consider that conduct is not consistent with the Aspiration Training's values and responsibilities - for example, through the Whistleblowing policy.
- The Board approve Aspiration Training's strategy, which will be reviewed each year (Strategic Plan).
- The Board ensure that managers have established an operating plan that identifies those aspects of the strategic plan being implemented. The Board ensures that the strategic plan is realistic and underpinned by a financial strategy (Strategic Plan).
- In order to ensure successful implementation, the Board will identify and adopt a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which include financial health, teaching, training and learning, learners' experience and outcomes, staff performance and stakeholders' opinions (Board KPI's).
- In doing so, the Board should make clear the division of responsibilities between strategic governance and leadership by the Board, and the operational management and leadership by Aspiration Training's senior management team led by the Chief Executive (Schedule of delegation).
- Board members will monitor and scrutinise Aspiration Training's activities effectively, including the use of external benchmarking comparators, challenging shortfalls in performance and ensuring that weaknesses are addressed (Board report/ GDPR).

### Policies

- The Board ensures that there are effective underpinning policies & systems in place to support the implementation of this Governance Code (Board annual planner).
- All policies are reviewed by and formally approved by the Board (Board report).
- The Board, through constructive challenge & effective support, monitors the implementation of each policy.
- A summary of policies, processes and strategies is included in the appendix to this Code, including an Executive team owner, last review and next review date.

## **Theme 2: Corporate Structures, Accountability and Roles**

**Provide clarity between the governance Board, chief executive and management team.**

- The Chair leads the Board and is responsible for its overall effectiveness in directing Aspiration Training. The Chair demonstrates independent and objective judgement, and promotes a culture of openness and debate, by facilitating constructive relations between directors; the Chair ensures the effective contribution of all non-executive directors.
- Non-executive directors provide constructive challenge, strategic guidance, and hold management to account. Aspiration Training will have not less than one independent non-executive director.
- Members of the Board comply with relevant legislation.
- The Board sets out its primary responsibilities in this governance code. These are published widely and are known to all Board members. These responsibilities are supported by a Board schedule of delegation which sets out how each responsibility is to be met, and by whom, including those items which the Board delegates to the Chief Executive.
- The Board seeks assurance that it meets all legal and regulatory requirements imposed on it as an organisation and as a publicly-funded learning and training provider, and organisational compliance should be kept under regular review.

## **Theme 3: Financial Strategy and Audit**

### **Financial**

**Adopt a financial strategy and funding plans which are compatible with the duty to ensure sustainability and solvency of the organisation.**

- The Board sets and approves the annual budget (Budget).
- The Board presents a fair, balanced & understandable assessment of Aspiration Training's position and prospects, and satisfies itself of the integrity of financial information by regularly reviewing financial performance against profile, budget & cash flow (Board report).
- The Board ensures that the necessary resources are in place for Aspiration Training to meet its objectives and measure performance against them.
- The Board has effective systems of control and risk management that promote value for money, efficient use of public funds, the capital estate and technology, and meet mandatory financial audit requirements (Risk Register/ Business continuity).
- The Board ensures compliance with the financial memoranda and ensures it understands and meets the conditions of funding, as set by the funding organisations.
- The Board reviews the risk register twice a year and ensures effective mitigation is in place to manage high scoring risks (Risk Register).
- Aspiration Training has financial regulations and appropriately documented delegations and procedures, approved by the Board, which specify its financial responsibilities and authority and those of any committees and its staff (Financial Delegation of Authority).

## Audit

**The Board ensures effective arrangements are in place for the management and quality assurance of financial performance data.**

- The Board complies with the funding organisations' mandatory requirements relating to audit, including adherence to the internal audit plan.
- The Board uses its annual report to account to all stakeholders for the performance and prospects of Aspiration Training, as well as to demonstrate compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements (Annual Report).

## Partnerships

- In establishing new business, the Board ensures effective governance arrangements are put in place with appropriate control, reporting and delegation systems. This includes any subcontracting arrangements.
- New ventures (such as acquiring new organisations or creating providers in other countries) must be approved by the Board. The Board will ensure the executive produces regular reports on the performance of all strategic partnerships and external businesses.

## Theme 4: Teaching and Learning

**Ensure exceptional teaching, training and learning by adopting effective underpinning policies and systems, including the monitoring of performance data, which also encourage and facilitate the learner and employer voice.**

- Appropriate teaching, learning, training and achievement performance indicators, to monitor quality and learners' progress, are reviewed by the Board (Board report).
- The Board ensures that the learning and training experience is effectively monitored and that appropriate learning resources have been made available. (Teaching and Learning strategy).
- The Board has high regard for the voice of its learners and employers, in relation to the quality of the learner experience, which is central to all Board decisions (Learner & Employer Voice).
- The Board approves the annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and ensures it is benchmarked against sector comparators and best practice.
- The Board ensures effective, timely and appropriate careers and progression advice is provided to all learners (Careers, Education Advice and Guidance).

## Quality performance data

- The Board is accountable for Aspiration Training's overall performance of government-funded provision and outcomes for all learners. This includes provision subcontracted to other providers (Quality cycle).
- Board members receive accurate performance data on each aspect of each type of provision on a monthly basis. Where appropriate, this should be confirmed through external sources. This data covers recruitment of learners, attendance, achievement of qualifications and, where relevant, progress from their starting point and their destination on completing their learning programme (Board Report).
- The Board reviews the results of learner and employer surveys and monitors the impact of the resulting quality improvement plans.
- Board members have the expertise required to interpret data and reports to identify trends in performance and progress against agreed challenging targets and improvement measures, and to compare Aspiration Training's performance with relevant national and regional averages. This information is used to hold senior managers to account for the quality of the provision and outcomes for all learners.
- The Board also uses this data to evaluate the impact of each type of provision on meeting the needs of learners, employers, local communities and other stakeholders in the Annual Report.

## Theme 5: Equality, Diversity and Safeguarding

**Meet, and aim to exceed, its statutory responsibilities to equality and diversity, and for ensuring that all learners are safe.**

- The Board ensures that it meets, and aims to exceed, its statutory responsibilities to equality and diversity through its own actions and behaviour in all aspects of its affairs. The Board promotes equality & diversity through leading by example.
- The Board approves and reviews the equality and diversity strategy, and adopts agreed performance indicators for implementation.
- The Board complies with all legal obligations in relation to equality and diversity. These go much further than avoiding discrimination, and require the active promotion of equality and diversity in a number of defined areas.
- The Board ensures that the Employee Engagement Strategy takes into account equality and diversity.
- The Board reports fully on its actions on equality and diversity in the operation of governance. The annual report includes a description of its policy, including any measurable objectives, and progress on implementation.

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## **Safeguarding and Prevent**

- The Board ensures a safe environment is provided for all learners and staff, and has a robust and regularly assessed and monitored Safeguarding & Prevent policy (Safer Recruitment).
- The Board ensures all policies, particularly those related to safeguarding, are actively implemented in any subsidiaries and partnerships.
- There are clear and published Complaints and Whistleblowing policies. The Board receives regular reports on the number and types of complaints made and how these complaints are resolved.

## Theme 6: Transparency

**The Board will be transparent and openly accountable, taking into account the views and concerns of all stakeholders, in order to demonstrate assurance that public funds are spent appropriately and efficiently.**

- The mission, vision and strategy are reviewed annually and published in the Annual Report.
- The Annual Report includes a section that sets out the governance arrangements - including the extent to which this Code has been adopted.
- As the organisation receives funding from government sources it sets the expectation that Board members undertake their role with due regard to the standards of public life. Board members must always avoid conflicts of interest and act solely in the interests of the organisation.
- The Board ensures that the Whistleblowing and Complaints procedures are easily accessible and that complaints, and resulting actions, are monitored.
- The Board ensures that Anti-Bribery and Anti-Fraud policies and activities are standing items on the Aspiration Training's Risk Register, and that these are reviewed on a regular basis
- Aspiration Training has a stakeholder plan in place which facilitates engagement with external stakeholders regularly, proactively and effectively.
- The Board publishes in the annual report an account of Aspiration Training's engagement with the main communities that it serves, the progress made towards meeting their needs for education and training, and how it aims to meet future needs.

## **Theme 7: Effective Governance**

### **Demonstrate effective governance arrangements, regularly reviewing governance performance and effectiveness.**

- Board membership is regularly reviewed and, if appropriate, refreshed to have a balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge.
- Appointments to the Board are subject to a formal, rigorous and transparent procedure, and an effective succession plan is in place for Board and senior management.
- Both appointments and succession plans are based on merit and promote diversity of gender, social and ethnic backgrounds, cognitive and personal strengths.
- The full Board meets as often as is required to undertake its responsibilities. Members attend all meetings where possible, and the Board must have 2 statutory directors in attendance to constitute a quorum.
- There is a presumption of openness and engagement, with all matters open to discussion by the whole Board. Occasionally, there will be matters where specific Board members should not be party to discussions; these are dealt with either by 'conflict of interest' declarations or may involve a two-part meeting.
- The Board may delegate some of its activities to committees and/or the Chair or Chief Executive, but has a formal schedule of matters reserved for collective decision on the Board agenda.

### **Remuneration of Senior Post Holders**

- The Board ensures that company remuneration and workforce policies and practices promote its long-term success, and are aligned with its strategy and values.
- A formal remuneration policy for employees and management is in place. Performance-related elements are clear, stretching, rigorously applied and aligned to the successful delivery of the strategy (remuneration policy).
- The Board exercises independent judgement and discretion when approving remuneration outcomes, taking account of company and individual performance, and wider circumstances. No directors are involved in deciding his or her own remuneration outcome.

### **Induction, Training and Development**

- All Board members have an induction to both corporate governance and the business.
- Ongoing training is provided for Board members that covers their statutory responsibilities and areas such as safeguarding and Prevent.

### **Governance Review**

- Regular evaluation of the Board takes into consideration the balance of skills, experience, independence, knowledge, diversity and how effectively members work together to achieve objectives.
- The Board reviews its own performance, including that of the Chair, annually.

## Appendix

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Owner
Strategic Plan	CEO
Board Report & KPI's	CEO
Board Annual Planner	CEO
Board Schedule of Delegation	CEO
Safeguarding & Prevent	Director of People and Culture
Safer Recruitment	Director of People and Culture
Equality and Diversity	Director of People and Culture
Teaching and Learning	MD England
Learner Voice	Marketing Director
Employer Voice	Marketing Director
Employee Engagement	Director of People and Culture
Careers, Education Advice and Guidance	MD England
Quality Cycle	MD Wales
Complaints, Compliments and Comments	MD Wales
Whistleblowing	Director of People and Culture
Budget	Finance Director
Risk Register	CEO
Financial Delegation of Authority	Finance Director
Annual Report	Marketing Director
Internal Audit Plan	CEO
Self-Assessment Report England	MD England
Self-Assessment Report Wales	MD Wales
Stakeholder plan	Marketing Director
Succession plan	Director of People and Culture
Remuneration policy	Director of People and Culture
General Data Protection Regulation	IT Director
Business Continuity	IT Director
Anti-Bribery policy	CEO