

Intelligent technology®



Ofsted, evidence and impact: supporting apprenticeship quality, inclusion and assurance under the 2025 framework



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Foreword from the Fellowship of Inspection Nominees (FIN)



The Further Education sector is entering a new era of accountability and ambition. Ofsted's renewed framework has raised the bar, particularly around inclusion, requiring providers to reset their expectations. Where 'Good' once felt reassuring, many now find themselves uncomfortable being assessed as merely meeting the '*expected standard*.'

This is not a downgrade; it's a deliberate refocus. The reality of achieving a secure fit with these heightened expectations is a game changer for inspectors and providers alike.

Funders, employers, and senior leaders must recognise this shift when setting priorities. Compliance alone is no longer enough. In fact, an overemphasis on ticking boxes can create a disconnect from what truly matters; delivering what learners need. The challenge is clear; providers must evidence the impact of their excellent delivery and showcase their strengths in ways that resonate with both inspectors and stakeholders.

So, how can providers maximise the opportunities this renewed focus on impact and evidence provides? Identifying trends in the impact of successful interventions drives consistent improvements. Visibility of trustworthy data enables governors and leaders to ask better questions, challenge assumptions, and verify the impact of what's being delivered.

The further education sector has adapted before and will again shine under this new scrutiny.

Finally, whatever you do, do it for your learner!



Compliance alone is no longer enough. In fact, an overemphasis on ticking boxes can create a disconnect from what truly matters; delivering what learners need.

Inspection expectations for apprenticeship providers are evolving



The 2025 Ofsted inspection framework brings sharper focus on quality, inclusion and impact across the full learner journey.

Inspectors are looking beyond compliance to understand how providers know their apprentices are progressing, how barriers to learning are identified and addressed, and how leadership assures itself that no learner is left behind.

This places increased importance on the systems that underpin delivery. Your apprenticeship delivery system must provide real-time insight, joined-up evidence and confidence at every level of the organisation.

We take a closer look at what the 2025 Ofsted framework means for apprenticeship providers, the growing role of data, evidence and inclusion, and how Aptem supports inspection readiness, quality improvement and learner success. From tools such as a skills scan to identify each learner's starting point during onboarding to customisable learning plans, integrated SCORM assets and flexible review functionality, Aptem Apprentice creates a full audit trail with all learner data displayed in a real-time Ofsted dashboard. This ensures that providers are confident that they are Ofsted-ready, every day.



What's new in the updated Ofsted framework?



The updated Ofsted framework shifts away from headline grades toward detailed, multi-area report cards with a new five-point grading scale.

It strengthens expectations on how apprenticeship providers understand and respond to learner needs, with a particular emphasis on inclusion and wellbeing. The goal of these changes is to increase transparency and nuance in inspection outcomes, and to strengthen inspection conduct and provider support.

Key areas of increased focus include:



- 1 Proactive removal of barriers so that disadvantaged learners and those with SEND can make strong progress.



- 2 Leadership oversight and accountability for quality and inclusion.



- 3 Learner progress over time, not just end-point outcomes.



- 4 Early identification of risk and targeted intervention.



- 5 Equitable experience for all apprentices, regardless of role, employer or circumstance.



- 6 Reliance on live, accessible evidence during inspection.

For apprenticeship providers, this means being able to clearly demonstrate how off-the-job training, assessment, support and employer engagement work together to deliver impact.



The goal of these changes is to increase transparency and nuance in inspection outcomes, and to strengthen inspection conduct and provider support.

From retrospective reporting to evidence-led delivery



Inspection conversations will be grounded in real practice. Inspectors expect providers to explain how they know their apprentices are learning, progressing and being supported — and how this insight informs action.

This requires:



Confidence in the accuracy of learner data.



Visibility of progress across the full apprenticeship journey.



Evidence of timely intervention and support.



Consistency between delivery teams, quality functions and leadership.

Fragmented systems and manual reporting make this difficult. A single, integrated apprenticeship delivery platform is essential.

▼ Performance Dashboard in Aptem





Ofsted expectations

Inspectors will explore how apprenticeship providers deliver against the following criteria:

- ✓ **Inclusion** – supporting diverse learner needs and promoting inclusion.
- ✓ **Curriculum and teaching** – assurance on the quality of teaching and learning.
- ✓ **Achievement** – demonstration of what learners know, can do and achieve.
- ✓ **Attendance and behaviour** – measurement of engagement, conduct and participation.
- ✓ **Personal development and wellbeing** – delivering wider development activities and support for learners.
- ✓ **Leadership and governance** – documenting the effectiveness of leadership, culture and oversight.

There is also a pass/fail assessment of safeguarding practices.

The goal of the inspection is to find assurance of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and evidence of support for diverse learner needs and the promotion of inclusive practices. The expectation is not perfection, but awareness, ownership and impact, all underpinned by accessible evidence, which may include:

- Tracking progress against programme intent and standards.
- Planning, delivery and documented evidence of off-the-job training.
- Identification of apprentices at risk and early intervention actions.
- Use of performance insights to drive continuous improvement programmes.



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The role of your apprenticeship management system



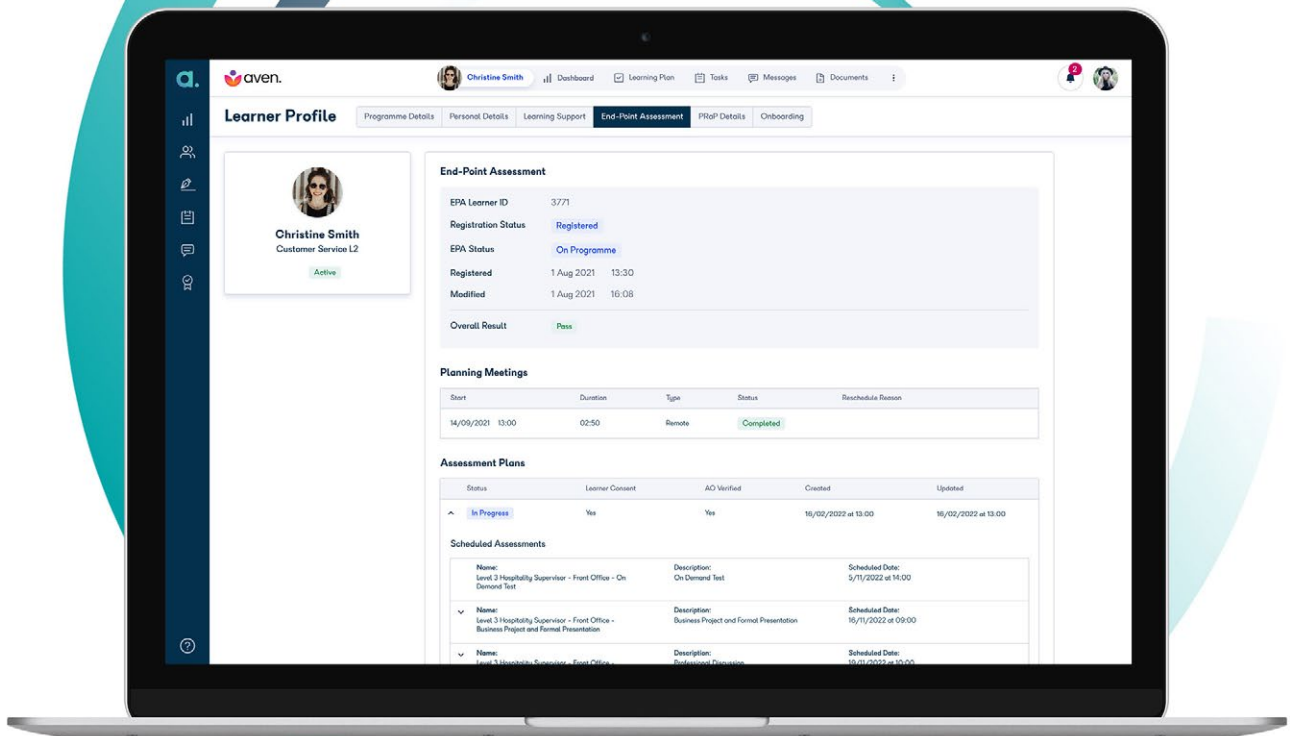
Your delivery and management system should act as a single source of truth for apprenticeships, bringing together learning, assessment, reviews, evidence and oversight.

An effective platform enables providers to:

- ✓ Understand what is happening now, not just historically.
- ✓ Spot trends across standards, cohorts and employers.
- ✓ Evidence decisions at coach, manager and leadership level.
- ✓ Respond quickly to emerging risks.
- ✓ Present a clear and credible narrative during inspection.

This is where Aptem plays a central role.

▼ Learner Profile in Aptem



How Aptem supports apprenticeship compliance, quality and assurance



Aptem is designed around the realities of apprenticeship delivery and inspection.

Key capabilities include:



End-to-end apprenticeship visibility

Live dashboards provide insight into engagement, progress, reviews, off-the-job training and achievement — supporting delivery teams and leaders alike.



Quality assurance and continuous improvement

Structured reviews, sampling and action tracking support robust internal quality processes and demonstrate improvement over time.



Joined-up evidence and audit trails

All learning activity, assessment, reviews and interventions are captured in one system, creating a consistent and reliable evidence base for inspection.

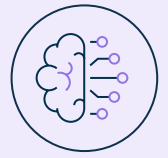


Leadership and governance insight

Senior leaders and governors can access clear, timely insight into performance, risk and impact, supporting informed oversight and accountability.



AI in apprenticeships – the role of Aptem Enhance



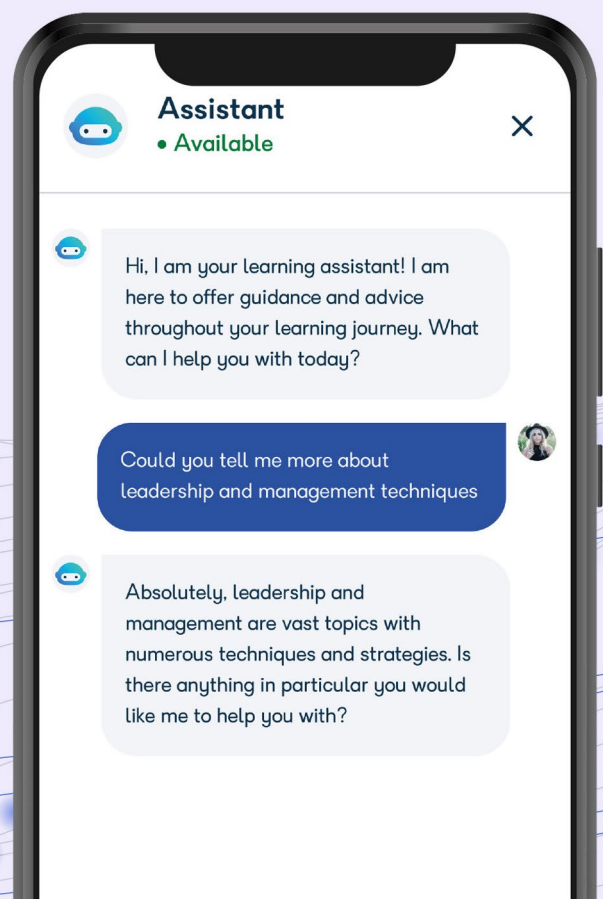
AI is becoming an increasingly important enabler of quality and inclusion in apprenticeships. Time-saving tools for delivery teams free capacity for targeted learner support, and interactive resources keep learners engaged.

Aptem Enhance is a suite of AI tools designed support learners, coaches and assessors in practical, inspection-relevant ways:

- ✓ **24/7 learner support through the Aptem virtual assistant**, reducing reliance on fixed schedules and improving access to guidance.
- ✓ **Accelerated workflows by using marking aid for instant, meaningful feedback**, enabling apprentices to progress without unnecessary delays.
- ✓ **Documented and measurable objective progress monitoring from checkpoint**, supporting validation of learner responses and progress.
- ✓ **Reduced admin and more productive, engaging reviews** due to enhanced reviews supporting review preparation and recording.

For Ofsted, this demonstrates thoughtful use of technology to improve learner experience, support independence and remove barriers to progress. In addition, Aptem Enhance also supports the leadership and governance criteria as inspectors consider whether leaders manage workload realistically and protect staff from avoidable strain, thus improving staff mental health and morale.

▼ Aptem virtual assistant



Supporting confident inspection conversations



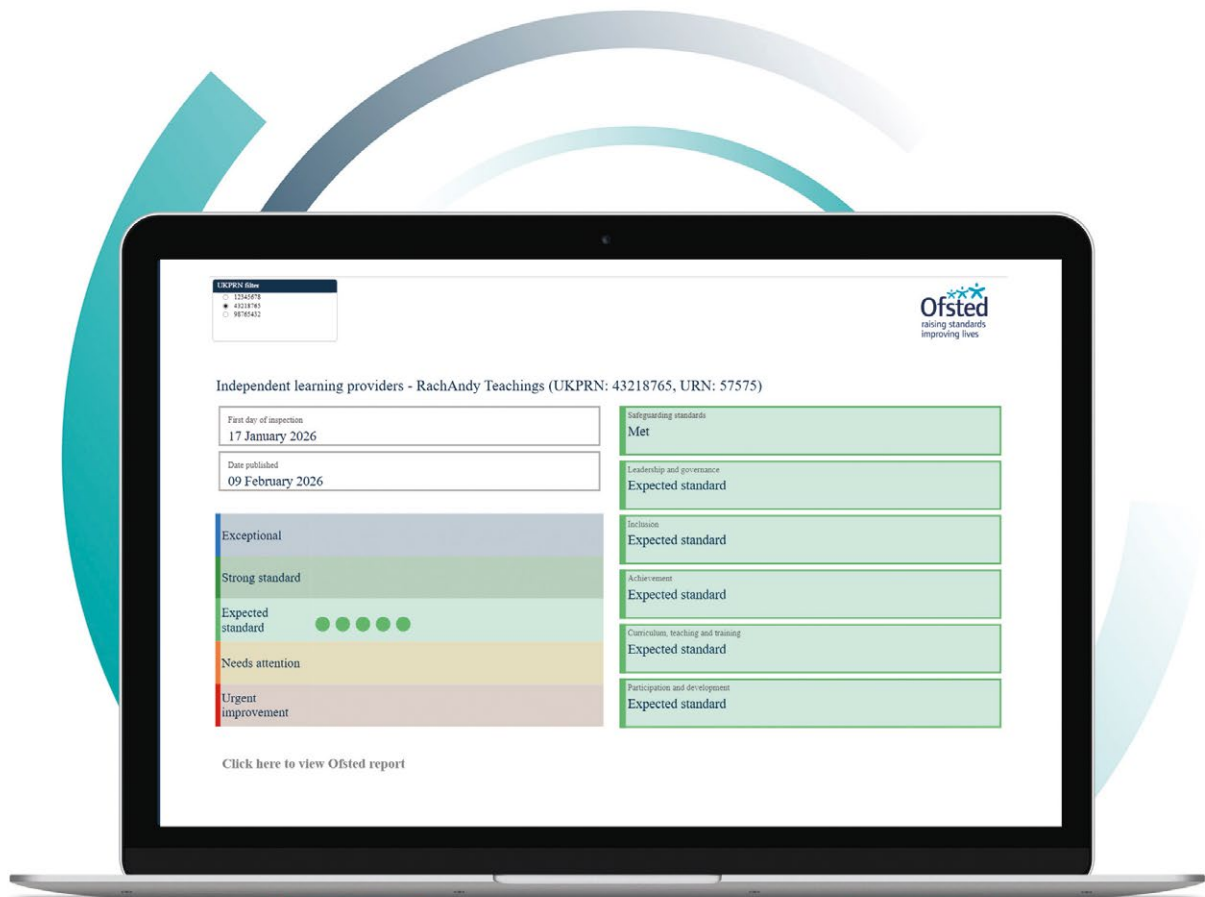
Aptem Apprentice helps providers to evidence strong practice against Ofsted's 2025 inspection priorities.

By bringing curriculum planning, delivery, learner support and organisational oversight into a single platform, Aptem allows providers to clearly demonstrate intent, implementation and impact with confidence and consistency. The benefits of the Enhance suite of AI-powered features are closely aligned to Ofsted priorities by helping providers to raise quality, boost learner engagement and save time on routine administration.

▼ Ofsted dashboard

Aptem gives providers the tools to:

- ✓ Access evidence aligned to Ofsted priorities quickly and consistently.
- ✓ Demonstrate how insight informs action.
- ✓ Show how apprentices are supported throughout their journey.
- ✓ Evidence inclusive practice and targeted intervention with customised learning plans.
- ✓ Align leadership decisions with learner outcomes.



Aligning with Ofsted priorities using Aptem Apprentice



Curriculum and teaching

Tutors can use our structured learning plans to define curriculum intent, sequencing and expected outcomes. Skills Radar provides supports effective formative assessment.

Reviews and sub-programmes enable personalised support and timely adjustments based on learner engagement and progress.

From the Enhance suite of features, checkpoint delivers objective progress monitoring, enhanced reviews standardises review documentation and marking aid provides learner-focused guidance.

These tools give inspectors clear evidence of how curriculum intent is translated into effective teaching and measurable learner progress.



Leadership and governance

Aptem Apprentice gives leaders real-time insight through performance, caseload and quality dashboards. These views allow quality managers and senior leaders to monitor delivery, identify emerging risks and understand workload pressures across teams and cohorts.

All four of the Enhance features contribute to strong leadership and governance. The virtual assistant for learners automates routine queries and enhanced reviews saves time on review admin, both delivering a reduction in staff workload. Checkpoint provides leaders with real-time data and evidence of learner progress, and marking aid demonstrates effective deployment of resources in line with educational priorities.

During inspection, leaders can show how decisions are informed by accurate data, how risks are identified early, and how governance is embedded at every level of the organisation.

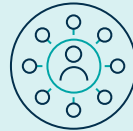


Achievement

Providers can track learner progress and outcomes through registration and certification data, performance dashboards and Skills Radar targets aligned to Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs). This enables providers to evidence both qualification achievement and broader skills development.

Checkpoint enables early identification of knowledge or skill gaps and marking aid delivers targeted, actionable feedback aligned to curriculum goals. Both features demonstrate improved learner progress and achievement for all cohorts, including disadvantaged and SEND learners.

Quality and accountability reports support conversations about cohort trends and continuous improvement, demonstrating a clear focus on learner outcomes.



Personal development and wellbeing

Personal development, employability and enrichment activities can be planned and delivered through sub-programmes and recorded within the learning plan.

Activity records provide clear context for participation and engagement, including where delivery is adapted to meet learner needs.

Aptem virtual assistant provides accessible, on-demand learning, helping learners build independence, resilience and confidence.

Inspectors can see that personal development, wellbeing, EDI and enrichment are planned, delivered and monitored as part of the core learner journey.



Inclusion

Assessment tools, tripartite skills scan, and customisable reviews help build a clear picture of learner needs from the outset. Reasonable adjustments and support strategies can be recorded through structured review actions and revisited regularly.

Learners requiring targeted monitoring can be grouped and tracked consistently, enabling providers to demonstrate early identification, ongoing support and effective review. Inspectors can see a clear, auditable approach to inclusive practice.

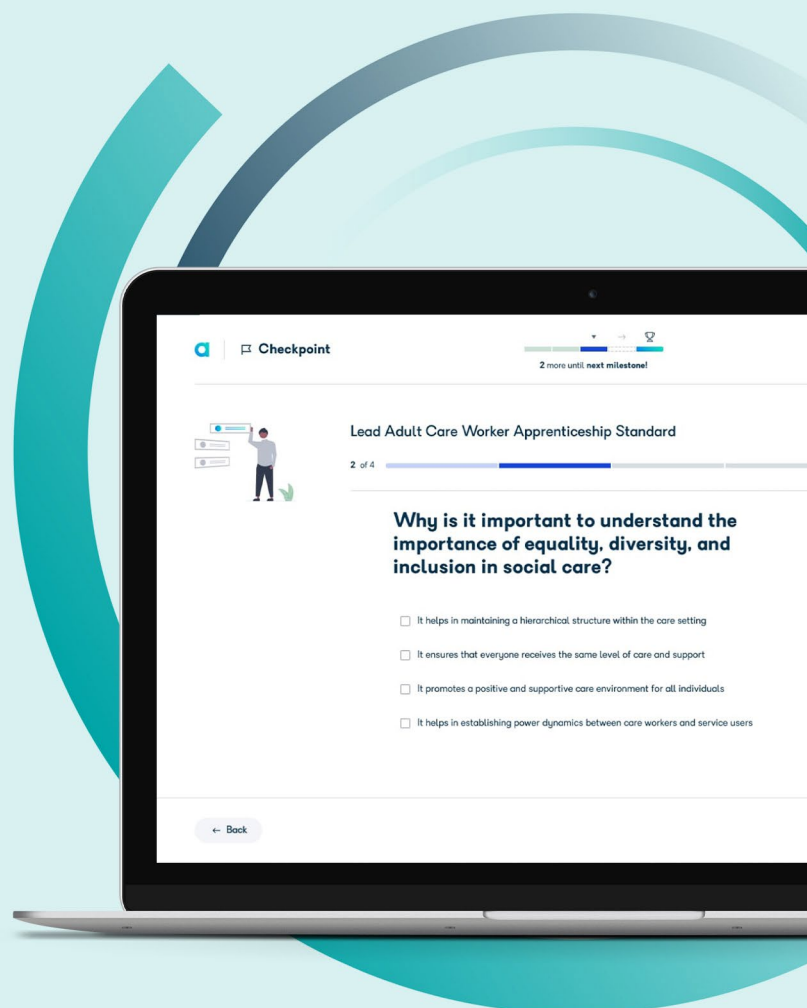
Aptem Apprentice supports a consistent, evidence-based and learner-centred approach to inclusion, aligning directly with Ofsted expectations.



Using Aptem's 'markers' – simple flags added to a learner's record – we were able to produce an inclusion dashboard. This gives us clear oversight of those with potential barriers to learning.

Hayley Wilcox, Chief Operating Officer, Instep

Checkpoint helps monitor the progress of vulnerable groups to close attainment gaps, while the virtual assistant reduces time spent on routine queries, allowing tutors to focus on personalised learner support. By removing administrative burden, enhanced reviews enables a more person-centred approach and reduces anxiety for SEND learners by removing the need for notetaking.



No learner left behind: inclusion and Aptem Assess



Inclusion is a core theme of the 2025 Ofsted framework, reinforced by the principle of 'no learner left behind'. For apprenticeship providers, this means understanding not only what learners know, but how they learn and what barriers they may have to progressing.

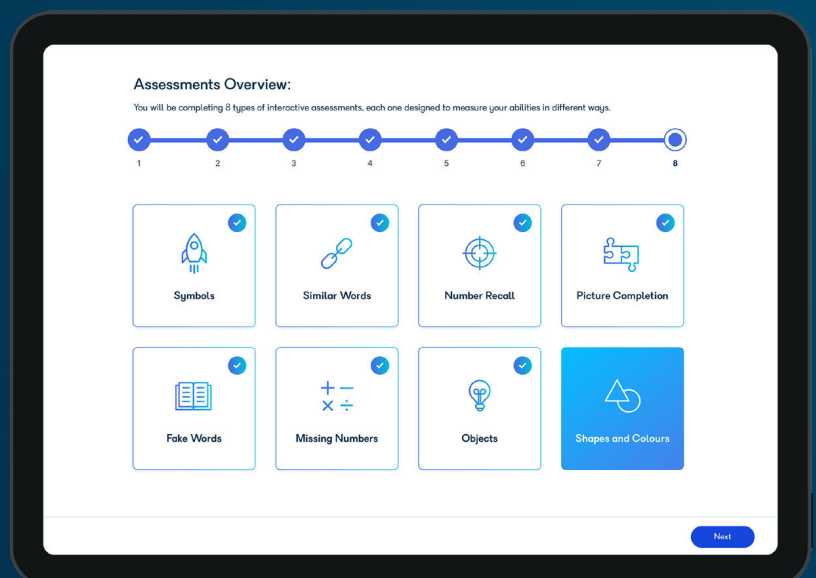
Aptem Assess introduces cognitive assessment into the onboarding process, giving providers early insight into how each apprentice processes information, solves problems and responds to learning challenges.

This supports:

- ✓ Early identification of learners who may need additional support.
- ✓ More personalised coaching and teaching approaches.
- ✓ Improved confidence and engagement for apprentices.
- ✓ Evidence-based inclusion strategies aligned to inspection expectations.

By embedding cognitive assessment at the start of the apprenticeship journey, providers can move from reactive support to proactive inclusion – and clearly demonstrate this during inspection.

Additional learning needs is just one facet of the inclusion theme. Providers must also look at socio-economic barriers to learning and data relating to these factors can be recorded with Aptem Apprentice using groups, markers and sub-programmes. These data can be reported on and used to monitor progress of specific groups.



Inclusion in practice — how Pearson TQ supports every apprentice with Aptem



Inclusion is not theoretical. It is demonstrated through day-to-day delivery decisions.

Pearson TQ, a national apprenticeship provider working with employers including the NHS and defence sector, uses Aptem to ensure every apprentice can access learning in a way that fits their role, schedule and individual needs.

With over 400 apprentices working irregular shifts, moving between locations and using a mix of shared devices and personal mobiles, Pearson TQ needed a platform built for flexibility and accessibility.

Using Aptem, they have:

- ✓ Enabled device-agnostic learning across mobile, tablet and desktop.
- ✓ Removed barriers for shift-based and deskless learners.
- ✓ Supported apprentices with specific accessibility needs.
- ✓ Embedded Aptem Assess into onboarding to identify support needs early.
- ✓ Used Aptem Enhance to improve responsiveness and learner independence.

This approach aligns directly with Ofsted's 'no learner left behind' expectations, ensuring equitable access and support across their apprenticeship provision.

Download the Pearson TQ case study to explore how Aptem supports accessibility, inclusion and flexible apprenticeship delivery.

Download

Aptem Compliance Advisory Board



The **Aptem Compliance Advisory Board** is a dedicated expert panel focused on apprenticeship policy, funding and compliance.

The Board brings together external sector specialists alongside Aptem's internal product, implementation and communications teams. It meets regularly to review regulatory developments and ensures Aptem's approach to product development is grounded in real-world inspection and audit experience.



Our Compliance Advisory Board ensures product decisions are grounded in real inspection and audit experience, so customers can rely on Aptem to evolve in step with Ofsted and funding requirements.

Dan Tiffany, Head of Product



The Board plays a vital role in how we support customers, helping us translate regulatory change into practical, compliant implementations that give providers confidence ahead of Ofsted inspection.

Georgina Burton, Head of Implementation

Expert insight shaping Aptem



The Compliance Advisory Board includes Kerry Boffey, founder and CEO of the Fellowship of Inspection Nominees (FIN), and David Lockhart-Hawkins, Managing Director at Lockhart Hawkins Limited.

Kerry brings extensive frontline experience supporting providers through Ofsted inspection, audit and quality assurance, while David is a nationally recognised compliance specialist advising providers on apprenticeship funding rules and regulatory change.

Their combined expertise plays a key role in shaping Aptem's roadmap and guidance — ensuring customers are supported not only to meet compliance requirements, but to approach Ofsted inspection with greater confidence and clarity.



Building high-quality, inclusive apprenticeship provision



The 2025 Ofsted framework reinforces the importance of quality, inclusion and impact in apprenticeships.

Providers must be able to show how they understand their apprentices, how they support progress, and how they assure themselves that their provision is working for everyone.

With Aptem, data becomes insight, insight becomes action, and action becomes evidence.



This enables apprenticeship providers to move beyond compliance, building more inclusive, confident and inspection-ready provision.

For more support

Aptem is purpose-built for compliant and efficient apprenticeship management. Implemented and used correctly, it can put you in control of your Ofsted preparedness and identify opportunities to drive quality across your provision.

- Aptem customers can talk to their Customer Success Manager about using the system to prepare for future Ofsted inspections.
- For consultative support on the updated Ofsted framework, the [Fellowship of Inspection Nominees \(FIN\)](#) has a highly specialised team that will provide you with invaluable insights on the planning, processes, and purposeful use of self-assessment.

If you are an organisation that helps deliver further education and employment programmes and would like to transform the way you deliver in a cost-effective, efficient and compliant way, get in touch:

enquiries@aptem.co.uk

020 3758 8540

Aptem is one of the fastest-growing SaaS companies to manage vocational training, skills and employability programmes. We offer a range of solutions to support the development of vocational skills and re-employment.

- ✓ **Aptem Apprentice**, a highly customisable system which helps providers to deliver compliant apprenticeship training.
- ✓ **Aptem Employ**, a unique, flexible, award-winning employability system that helps to get people back into the workplace quickly and for the long term.
- ✓ **Aptem Skills**, our award-winning end-to-end delivery platform that enables fully compliant ASF course delivery and accelerates re-employment.
- ✓ **Aptem Assess**, a cognitive assessment tool that enables you to seamlessly identify and respond to learning needs.



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