



Skills South Tyneside

Provider Manual



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Introduction



South Tyneside Council Skills Service operates under the brand Skills South Tyneside and delivers ESFA funded post-16 education and training as a Prime Contractor in partnership with our-subcontracted training providers.

This document sets out the main features of commissioning, contract management and quality assurance for the 2021/22 academic year with the intention to give you, the training provider, key information that will help you plan and meet Skills South Tyneside’s compliance and quality assurance requirements.

This is one important document which is part of our wider quality framework. You need to understand this manual and other documentation made available to you, ensuring that you adhere to the expectations within. We have used process charts and where relevant given links to key documentation that you, as a sub-contractor will use or need.

All policies and additional documents can also be found on the Provider section of the website which can be accessed [here](#).



Commissioning

Purpose

This section sets out and explains our commissioning cycle.

Skills South Tyneside commissions education and training provision via open and competitive tendering. This allows the Council to fill gaps in provision, address market failure, drive up quality and ensure that high quality learning providers not currently engaged in post-16 education, learning and training activity have an opportunity to secure contracts.

The Service has developed a commissioning approach to reflect best practice, to respond to legislative requirements and to take account of requirements set out in the Local Authority's Constitution. Our commissioning priorities are set out in the Post-16 Education and Training Local Strategic Commissioning Statement.

Robust commissioning ensures that the intended curriculum offers learners the knowledge and skills that reflect the needs of the local and regional context and takes into account the needs of learners, employers, and the local, regional and national economy, as necessary.

Phases of Commissioning

The commissioning process is managed in two phases, a Selection Questionnaire to establish a provider framework followed by a Further Competition application issued to successful Selection Questionnaire applicants. Both stages are managed via the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO).

NEPO Registration

The NEPO portal is the facility through which Skills South Tyneside procures all education and training delivery. All Selection Questionnaires, Further Competition applications and queries in relation to these must be submitted via NEPO. All prospective providers must be registered on the NEPO portal in order to access opportunities by registering at www.nepo.org.



Invitation to Tender

An Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued to the NEPO portal for bidders to view and consider. The ITT contains a pack of documentation to guide and support bidding organisations through the commissioning process, service specification, application forms and scoring criteria for the Selection Questionnaire (SQ) stage and sample application forms and scoring criteria for the Further Competition stage.

The Invitation to Tender is created for:

- Prospective providers who are required to go through a pre-qualification Standard Questionnaire stage to become an approved provider listed on the Council's framework; and
- Providers who have passed the Selection Questionnaire stage who are required to pass the Further Competition in order to access funding where providers can bid into a number of categories.

The Commissioning Packs are issued via the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) web portal www.nepo.org.

The Service will determine how frequently the NEPO portal will open to receive Selection Questionnaires and/or Further Competition Applications subject to availability of funding and the mix and balance of existing provision.

Selection Questionnaire (SQ)

All prospective providers are required to complete a Selection Questionnaire (SQ). The aim of the Selection Questionnaire is to determine provider capability to deliver against set criteria:

- Grounds for Exclusion
- Economic and Financial Standing
- Compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Technical and professional Ability :
- UK Register of Learning Providers Registration
- Ofsted Rating
- Curriculum Offer
- Learner Recruitment
- Provision and Track Record
- Teaching Staff
- Quality Assurance
- Progression and Impact
- Information, Advice and Guidance
- Social Added Value

Bidders must indicate which Categories they wish to be included in should they pass the Selection Questionnaire stage. Any queries in relation to the process must be submitted to the Council via the NEPO portal.

Selection Questionnaire Evaluation

The Council will oversee the scoring of Selection Questionnaires to determine the capacity and capability of bidders in relation to the Selection Questionnaire scoring criteria.

South Tyneside Council corporate finance will undertake scoring of the Financial Information element of the SQ.

Selection Questionnaire Pass/Fail Notification

Notifications are issued to each bidder via the NEPO portal in the form of a notification letter and completed Selection Questionnaire evaluation.

When a Selection Questionnaire passes, bidders will be invited to submit a Further Competition application for their respective categories at the next opening of the NEPO portal for further competition.

When a Selection Questionnaire fails, bidders may re-submit at a future opening of the NEPO portal.

It is the responsibility of bidders to maintain up-to-date contact details on the NEPO portal.

Further Competition

Bidders who are successful at the Selection Questionnaire stage will be invited to submit a Further Competition Application for any categories they have indicated an interest in during the Selection Questionnaire stage.

Within the further competition bidders must respond to questions in relation to the following:

- Organisational Profile
- Course Information
- Delivery Profile
- Description of Provision
- Programme Demand
- Geography
- Learner Profile
- Outcomes for Learners and Progression

Bidders must upload fully completed Further Competition Applications to the NEPO Portal and into the relevant category. Late submissions and submissions to the incorrect category will be rejected.

Further Competition Evaluation

Skills South Tyneside evaluates Further Competition Applications in accordance with the published evaluation matrix and timetables. Feedback is produced on the Further Competition evaluation sheet confirming any contract award and additional feedback in relation to the submission.

Further Competition Pass/Fail Notification

Notifications are issued to each bidder via the NEPO portal in the form of a notification letter and completed Evaluation sheet.

Query Resolution

In the interest of fairness, openness and transparency, all queries relating to the Selection Questionnaire / Further Competition process must be submitted to Skills South Tyneside via the NEPO portal. Providers must not canvass or request information pertaining to the bidding process directly from any member, Director, employee, representative or adviser of the Council.

[Commissioning Process Chart](#)



Performance Management

Purpose

Performance management is key to ensuring that providers demonstrate a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training to all. This section sets out the expectations and requirements of providers who have been awarded a contract to deliver education and skills on behalf of Skills South Tyneside.

Providers awarded a contract are allocated to an Employment and Skills Officer (ESO) who oversees the operational relationship, performance management arrangements and implementation of any remedial action.

Contract Clarification

Following a successful Further Competition Application, providers will be contacted by their designated Employment and Skills Officer to arrange a contract clarification meeting. Included with the invite will be a Provider Checklist which details the documentation that providers are required to supply in advance of, or during, the meeting. This list includes:

- Full staff details including qualifications and confirmation of DBS checks
- Delivery profiles
- Evidence of Awarding Body registration
- Evidence of staff training
- ICT Usage policy
- ESF compliance evidence

[Contract Clarification Process Chart](#)

Contract Issued

Providers must read and check the contract provided to them. Any queries must be raised at the contract clarification stage. Two copies are issued and both copies must be signed and returned to Skills South Tyneside. Employment and Skills Officers will arrange for counter signature and return providers final copy to them.

Contracts with an initial value of up to £250,000 will be signed off by the Head of Legal Services. Contracts with an initial value that exceeds £250,000 will be submitted to Cabinet for approval. The Strategic Commissioning Manager will witness contracts on behalf of Skills South Tyneside.

Delivery Profiles

Delivery profiles show when learners associated with a schedule are planned to start, complete and achieve. This information is to be used by both providers, and Skills South Tyneside, to track performance of the schedule.

Any changes to the planned delivery profile can be discussed and agreed at the contract clarification meeting. Any changes must reflect a realistic pattern of delivery and avoid back-loading of starts towards the end of the academic year. If providers are commissioned to deliver as part of the North of Tyne Combined Authority contract, delivery should be split as follows:

August 2021 – March 31st 2022	April – July 31st 2021
62%	38%

Performance Targets

Scorecards measuring performance will be issued at monthly contract meetings by Employment and Skills Officers. The scorecards set out standard performance indicators as well as Skills South Tyneside's targets for expected delivery. The information provided on the scorecard includes:

- Learner demographic
- Success rates
- In borough numbers
- Timeliness and accuracy of paperwork
- Destination tracking
- Learner satisfaction
- Year to date funding profile
- Number of safeguarding issues raised
- Number of RIDDORS raised

Risk Management and Sanctions

Providers are expected to meet the performance targets agreed for each schedule as set out in the contract and within the scorecard. Repeated failure to meet targets or contractual obligations may result in the application of sanctions. These may include but are not limited to:

- Course rejection for incomplete or late course approval.
- Payment suspended where paperwork submissions are consistently outside of prescribed timescales.
- Payment or contract suspension where course amendments are not suitably notified.
- Data rejection due to high error rating.
- Notice of concern or notice of withdrawal where success rates are consistently low.
- Payment suspended where poor or /no destination tracking data is submitted.
- Contract suspension or withdrawal where Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment is graded as unproductive to the learner
- Contract suspension or withdrawal for failure to meet or address safeguarding and/or health and safety responsibilities.

Any performance deemed by Skills South Tyneside to be a serious non-conformance will result in a Notice of Concern being issued to providers. This will be accompanied by intensive monitoring and short-term action planning for immediate improvement.

Once a Notice of Concern is issued, the council has the right to require providers to suspend recruitment until the Notice has been lifted. This will happen only when actions within timescales have been addressed to the satisfaction of Skills South Tyneside.

If actions are not addressed, a Notice of Withdrawal of Funding will be issued.

ESF Compliance

As part of the contractual obligations to the Education Skills Funding Agency, Skills South Tyneside must ensure compliance to European Social Fund (ESF) requirements as it may have been used as match funding. In order to do this the Service needs to provide information to comply with the ESF requirements and adhere to certain criteria. Providers must supply Skills South Tyneside with a copy of their Environmental Sustainability Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, photographic evidence of an ESF plaque displayed in their building and evidence that the ESF logo is on their website.

An ESF Compliance checklist will be issued as part of contract clarification.



Tutor and Venue Delivery Information

Before any delivery will be approved, providers are required to supply evidence confirming all tutors are appropriately qualified to the standards set by Skills South Tyneside, suitable for delivery of provision and that all venues have been assessed and deemed suitable and safe for delivery.

It is imperative that those responsible for delivery of Skills South Tyneside provision have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach. It is important to ensure that where learners are working remotely or online that the learning environment is safe and appropriate to ensure effective learning can take place.

At the contract clarification meeting providers are required to supply a completed Provider Staff Details form which confirms the following for each tutor:

- Relevant qualifications/training details including safeguarding and Prevent
- A brief description of their duties
- A GDPR Communication Opt-In
- Sight of an enhanced DBS for all staff working on Skills South Tyneside contracts must be sighted by Employment and Skills Officers/Safeguarding Team

Tutors are required to meet the following qualification standards as a minimum:

- Minimum Level 4 Teaching Qualification or Level 3 Assessors qualification
- Vocational specialism at the level higher than being taught or;
- Significant relevant occupational competency
- Level 2 in maths and English

Finally, for every delivery venue:

- A Venue Risk Assessment completed within the last 12 months
- A Tutor Risk Assessment completed within the last 12 months
- Additional Risk Assessments or COVID-19 compliance documentation may be required

[Tutor and Venue Delivery Information Process Chart](#)

Contract Monitoring

The contract monitoring process is undertaken by Employment and Skills Officers when providers begin delivery of training and education. These arrangements are in place to track delivery, maximise outcomes for learners and to support providers to meet quality standards specified by the Service. The four stages of contract monitoring are as follows:

Course Approval

Providers must submit a fully completed Course Approval to their Employment and Skills Officer at least 14 days prior to the course start date ensuring the correct schedule number is used. Skills South Tyneside uses the Course Approval to validate that the venue is safe for learners through the risk assessment process as well as confirming that the tutor is suitably qualified and DBS checked.

For any schedules that are approved for funding in-year planning documentation must be submitted at least 14 days before the planned course start date.

Upon approval, Employment and Skills Officers will forward a course code to providers. This code must be used on all paperwork relating to the course in question to assist with course tracking.

Skills South Tyneside reserves the right to withhold course approval until all evidence is received and meets requirements.

[Course Approval Process Chart](#)

PICS Learner Enrolments

Following contract clarification Employment and Skills Officer will require a maximum of two named individuals per provider who will manage the PICS process for their organisation. The named individuals will be invited to attend PICS training following which a PICS log-in and user manual will be issued. Once this has taken place all enrolments, as directed by Employment and Skills Officers, should be uploaded directly to PICS.

SharePoint Documentation Submissions

Following contract clarification providers will be given access to the SharePoint system. Access will be granted to the email addresses provided to the Skills Service but the access can't be shared between users and will need to be requested from Skills South Tyneside directly. Employment and Skills Officers will create a folder for documentation uploads with clearly labelled sub-folders so that all submissions are easily identifiable and organised effectively.

Data Validation

Providers must submit paperwork to evidence the existence of the learner, eligibility for funding, recorded attendance and successful completion of courses. Key evidence includes:

- Learner Enrolments - to be submitted no later than 14 days after course start date
- Course register - the first copy submitted no later than 14 days after course start date and the final copy submitted 14 days after the course end date
- Personal Learning Plans - submitted no later than 14 days after the course end date
- Awarding Body Certificates (for accredited provision)
- Certificates of Completion (for non-accredited provision)

Providers are expected to submit accurate data to inform funding claims. Poor data quality may result in payments being delayed or data being rejected.

Providers must respond to queries within 7 days of the query being raised with them by Employment and Skills Officers.

Performance Review and Monthly Meetings

If providers are delivering learning, Skills South Tyneside requires a monthly performance meeting with their Employment and Skills Officer. The meeting will discuss the following points:

- Delivery against profile and any changes
- Performance Targets
- Automatic Reconciliation
- Paperwork Audit
- Learners Passed End Dates
- Learner Progress
- Safeguarding and H&S issues or concerns
- Learner Case Studies

Providers must comply with the targets set within the agreed timescales and agree new targets when necessary. The provider action plan allows the Service to build a picture of overall performance against provider's contracts.

Employment and Skills Officers will maintain a record of performance related discussions and provide regular updates at Skills South Tyneside weekly team meetings and, if required, more frequent discussions with the Strategic Commissioning Manager.

A quarterly formal reconciliation process takes place as set out in the Automatic Reconciliation section. A review of starts and outcomes against the profile informs decisions concerning growth and reconciliation. This is reviewed at monthly contract meetings.

Providers' performance will be a contributing factor when considering growth requests and future funding allocations.

Performance Review and Monthly Meetings Process Chart



Contract Closure

Providers' contracts will be deemed closed when the term of the contract has come to an end or at the end of the Academic Year, which is 31st July.

In order to confirm contract closure and release any final payments providers must ensure the following deadlines for data submissions are met:

- learner enrolments no later than 31st July
- Completion and Achievement documentation no later than 30th September

Automatic Reconciliation

The purpose of the automatic reconciliation process is to take remedial action against underperformance, and provide funding growth to providers who demonstrate strong performance - subject to activity aligning with Skills South Tyneside priorities and affordability. This evidence based approach helps ensure best use of public funding allocations by redirecting Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding to provision which is demonstrating strong performance and continues to align to the Council's commissioning priorities.

The Service uses census points to monitor the performance of contracts against the delivery profile. Reconciliation will occur against the year to date delivery profile for learner starts in line with the following thresholds and timescales:

Minimum delivery against profiled starts	Census Point
90%	End of October
95%	End of January
97%	End of April

Any difference in allocated funding and volumes where delivery does not meet these minimum thresholds will be reconciled and reduced to reflect the true pattern of delivery.

Where performance falls below the minimum delivery against profiled starts for a second time, Skills South Tyneside will reconcile any difference in allocated funding and volumes and extrapolate this difference across the remainder of the academic year.

Financial Help

Payments

Purpose

This section explains the payments for services, and the financial support funds potentially available to learners and providers.

Payment for Services

Once accurate and valid data submissions have been made to Skills South Tyneside providers can raise an invoice indicating the amount of the claim quoting the relevant schedule number, course code, and what the payment is for i.e. starts, completions, achievements.

Providers must send the invoice for this amount to their Employment and Skills Officer, along with relevant information and documents to support their claim.

This should include:

- The invoice with the relevant purchase order number as supplied by South Tyneside Council's finance team
- A fully completed Project Claim Form. All claim documentation must contain the relevant course code supplied by Skills South Tyneside
- An accurately completed register to evidence learner starts, attendance and completion
- Certificates of achievement
- Invoices must not be sent directly to Finance but must come directly to Employment and Skills Officers

Payment of the invoice will be in line with the terms set out in the agreed payment terms within providers' contract with Skills South Tyneside. Payments will only be made once claims have been fully validated by Employment and Skills Officers.

16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is money given by the government to Skills South Tyneside to support learners to stay in learning. Learners must be aged 16-18 on 31st August and on a programme of learning funded by the Service to be eligible to receive the bursary.

There are two types of bursary; the vulnerable bursary pays up to £1,200 a year for young people in a defined group identified by government and secondly the discretionary bursary is awarded by Skills South Tyneside to individuals depending on specific personal circumstances. Only

students aged 19-24 who are subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) may apply for a discretionary bursary. Only students aged 19-24 who are subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) may apply for a discretionary bursary.

Free Meals for Disadvantaged Learners

Skills South Tyneside provide free meals to disadvantaged students who are aged over 16 and enrolled on one of our 16-18 traineeships or study programmes. 'Disadvantaged' is defined as the students being in receipt of, or having parents/guardian who are in receipt of a specified state benefit.

The Guide to Free Meals clarifies the eligible benefits. The application form for free meals is included in the 16-19 Bursary Fund application form.

Application forms for 16-19 Bursary or free meals and accompanying evidence of entitlement should be received by Skills South Tyneside within four weeks of the learner's start date. Failure to submit application forms and relevant evidence within this timescale may result in any payments awarded not being backdated.

Additional Learner Support (ALS)

Skills South Tyneside is committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity ensuring that all learners reach their learning potential and achieve success on an appropriate course of study. The Service aims to provide sensitive advice and guidance to all learners prior to entry to raise aspiration and to assess any additional needs in a timely and comprehensive manner. Learners are to be encouraged to disclose their needs confidentially at all stages of the learner journey.

There are limited amounts of funding available for Additional Learner Support (ALS) therefore the impact of its interventions is reviewed annually to ensure that the funding is used to the best effect and impacts positively on learner achievement.

Application forms, eligibility and guidance notes for bursaries, free meals and learner support are available through Skills South Tyneside provider section of our [website](#).



Quality Assurance

Purpose

This section sets out procedures for quality assuring teaching, learning and assessment as well as the expectations on providers for quality assuring their own provision.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is an integral part of quality assurance within Skills South Tyneside and for all providers. It is not just about proving quality, but improving it. Each provider's self-assessment findings contribute to the overarching self-assessment report which is submitted annually to Ofsted.

The primary purpose of self-assessment is to:

- Review performance against standards and expectations
- Compare performance against previous years and national benchmarks
- Recognise strengths and areas for improvement
- Identify and respond to the needs of learners and subcontractors
- Prepare for external assessment including inspection

Self-assessment is mapped to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2019) and enables providers to give factual, evidence based data to support their judgements. Self-assessment will take place annually, between September and December and all providers are expected to be involved and contribute.

[Self-Assessment Process Chart](#)

Business Improvement Planning

Actions arising from the self-assessment process and other ongoing quality activities including but not limited to Matrix inspections, Senior Management team meetings and Skills South Tyneside team meetings, will be included in the Service Business Improvement Plan (BIP). The BIP will identify:

- Actions to be taken
- Persons responsible for taking action
- Impact
- Timescales
- Success criteria
- Progress

A review of Skills South Tyneside's progress against the BIP will form part of ongoing strategic management review through our Senior Management team meetings and performance clinics. Any specific actions for the provider will be taken forward via the Provider Action Plan.

The Service recommends that all providers create their own business improvement plan and build the development and regular review of it into every aspect of their organisation in order to create a culture of continuous improvement. The Quality team within Skills South Tyneside are able to support providers in establishing this as a process if this is not already in place.

Quality Reviews

Skills South Tyneside undertakes bi-annual Quality Reviews with each provider. The purpose of quality reviews are to ensure that provider's organisational procedures, practices and delivery of training and education meet the expectations of Skills South Tyneside, as well as their contractual obligations. The process is intended to be collaborative with the aim of supporting providers to continuously improve and demonstrate outstanding performance.

The reviews will focus on validating statements made at commissioning and will review progress against any actions set at previous quality reviews with an additional focus on any topical areas of importance. The dates for the quality reviews will be provided at contract clarification alongside other key dates that the Service requires attendance at for the coming academic year. Quality reviews can be undertaken remotely with Providers being issued a link to the SharePoint system to upload the evidence required to undertake the review including details on what naming conventions should be used for all files.

In advance of the quality review providers will be asked to prepare evidence for the visit. This will include items such as key organisational policies, staff records, self-assessment report, business improvement plans, ESFA eligibility criteria and schemes of work and lesson plans. Prior to the visit the Service will review any information which has been submitted during the previous academic year and through contract clarification, and if any of the requested information has already been submitted providers will not be required to resubmit. If any of the information requested can't be provided this will be added to the provider action plan.

The visit will be carried out by a representative from the Quality Team within Skills South Tyneside, an Employment and Skills Officer and relevant provider staff. The findings and grades against criteria from the visit will be provided, with any actions fed into the provider action plan. Progress against the identified actions will be reviewed at the regular contract meetings.

[Quality Review Process Chart](#)

Observation of Teaching, Learning, Assessment (OTLA) and Learner Work Product Reviews

The aim of the observation process is to be supportive and developmental for tutors and assessors and to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be outstanding across all service provision.

The OTLA process is designed to ensure that providers have taken into account all elements of the Education Inspection Framework, but in particular the intent, implementation and impact of learning.

Observations are carried out at key points throughout the academic year with the aim of observing each provider at least twice over that period. Wherever possible, Skills South Tyneside will carry out observations jointly with the provider's member of staff who is responsible for quality assurance.

A clear set of observation criteria will be shared with all tutors and assessors prior to the observation to be used both by Skills South Tyneside and the provider in advance of the OTLA. The criterion the Service uses was created in collaboration with providers and sets out expectations for both sessions and documentation, with three judgements of Exceptional, Beneficial and Unproductive given.

Planning documentation will be used to inform the grading of the OTLA and should demonstrate that providers have selected and developed a curriculum that builds the knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners need in order to take advantage of the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences that prepare them for their next stage in education, training or employment.

Feedback will be provided either immediately following the observation or by an arranged telephone discussion to moderate the grades with providers' quality representative. The completed observation feedback template will be returned to providers and there is opportunity for tutors to provide their own feedback.

Any areas of improvement identified within the observation will be noted on the OTLA template with timescales for completion and the person responsible for the action will be designated. Any actions will be followed up as part of the provider action plan with Employment and Skills Officers. Should providers disagree with the grades awarded following the observation the Lesson Observation Policy provides full information on the appeals and complaints process.

As standard practice the Service announces observations with at least 48 hours notice, however, Skills South Tyneside can undertake unannounced observations should this be necessary.

For online or remote delivery Skills South Tyneside undertakes Learner Work Product Reviews which replace the OTLA process for classroom delivery. Quality assurance will be undertaken at course level and will focus on learners where the course or qualification has been completed. Grades provided will mirror OTLA gradings of exceptional, beneficial or unsupportive as agreed by the supply chain. All funding streams are in scope for remote visits including 16-19 Study Programme, Adult Education Budget and Non-Regulated Adult Education. Providers will be issued with a template and link to the SharePoint system where evidence should be uploaded the day prior to the visit. The course and learners in scope will be specified two weeks in advance of the visit with feedback sent to providers.

It is expected that each provider maintains their own robust policy and annual plan for internal observations and the outcomes should be shared with Skills South Tyneside when requested. If providers do not have a systematic approach to observing their own provision the Service can help support the development of this.

Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process Chart

Continuous Professional Development

Skills South Tyneside strongly believes that continuous professional development gives tutors the chance to reinforce their existing skills and allow them to build new ones, which in turn helps learners to achieve their full potential. Skills South Tyneside aims to ensure that there is a strong focus on improving staff's knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. This, in turn should ensure that the practice and subject knowledge of staff are built up and improve over time. The Service recommends that all providers have their own robust CPD policy in place for staff to support them with the time needed to undertake this.

Skills South Tyneside is committed to supporting provider's staff and delivery, as well as promoting best practice within the region. To support this, the Service offers monthly CPD workshops on a range of different topics, delivered remotely on a virtual platform or face to face where possible. These sessions offer attendees the opportunities to explore practical ways to improve their provision, performance and learner outcomes.

Previous CPD events have included Embedding Key Themes and Effective Planning, Ofsted Readiness, Self-Assessment and the Learner Journey. At each session the aim is to offer advice and guidance but also encourage collaboration between providers by actively promoting sharing of best practice as well as facilitating a networking session after each event.

The Service invites guest speakers to attend to share their experiences and ask that providers bring along any areas for discussion, so that rather than the events being about simply imparting information they become meaningful and interactive professional development.

The Learner Journey

During any learning programme learners 'travel' through a series of recognised stages from entry to exit in what is known as the learner journey. Providers should be able to evidence good practice at each of the stages set out below.

Recruitment

All existing and prospective learners must receive current, accurate and impartial information advice and guidance (IAG) regarding all aspects of their learning programme.

Providers are expected to answer learner queries and support learners to select the most suitable course. Where necessary, learners must be signposted to other organisations where more in depth guidance is needed. The outcome of this IAG should be included on the submitted Initial Assessment.

When ascertaining the relevance of a course of study for learners, it must be clear what the programme is preparing learners for. It must also be clear what learners will need to be able to know and do at the end of their learning or training.

To support learners and providers Skills South Tyneside also offer a free interactive assessment tool and career explorer, [Career Coach](#) which helps individuals to discover courses available to them and in-demand careers based on their interests and aptitudes. Encouraging learners to make use of Career Coach demonstrates that providers are giving learners accurate, timely and impartial careers guidance which enables them to make informed choices about their learning programme.

Quality Reviews and OTLAs will focus on the extent to which learners received thorough and impartial careers guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their current learning and future career plans. Providers must record IAG in the Personal Learning Plan and provide supporting evidence where necessary.

It should be evident that all learning builds towards an end point and that learners are being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment at each stage of their learning.

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Employer Engagement

The Post-16 Education and Training Local Commissioning Statement indicates Skills South Tyneside's ambition to host a learning offer that is capable of engaging individuals, no matter their starting point, and provide a route to a sustainable employment outcome.

The Service hosts a monthly partnership breakfast which provides opportunity for providers and referral organisations to meet with local and regional employers to collaborate and discuss sector demand, labour market information and potential progression opportunities for learners.

Providers must ensure that on relevant programmes learners are provided with access to employers and working environments, through work experience opportunities, which aim to enrich their understanding of industry expectations and procedures.

Quality reviews as well as regular contract meetings with Employment and Skills Officers will determine the extent to which:

- Providers collaborate with employers and other partners to ensure that the range and content of the provision is aligned to local and regional priorities (this may include inviting local employers to sit on their governing or supervisory board)
- Employers are involved in the design and implementation of programmes.
- Employer feedback informs programme development.
- Learner outcomes are aligned with the occupational area of study and intended destinations match those identified on the course approval.

Initial and Diagnostic Assessment

Initial assessment should be used to inform learners' starting points and to plan learning. All initial and diagnostic assessment findings must be recorded in the Personal Learning Plan.

Initial assessment should identify a learner's level, allowing for the right learning programme to be selected. Skills South Tyneside provides an Initial Assessment template that covers a range of topics that can be used as a basis for a more detailed course-specific Diagnostic Assessment that is contextualised to the vocational area where appropriate.

Quality reviews will focus on the extent to which staff identify learners' additional support and learning needs quickly and accurately through effective initial assessment, leading to the provision of high quality and effective support to help learners achieve as well as they can.

Additional learner support requirements must be referred to Employment and Skills Officers.

Induction

All learners must receive comprehensive induction. To support this Skills South Tyneside provide a PowerPoint presentation for tutors to use with learners which touches on each of the main areas that should be covered within an induction. This includes having been provided with the Learner Handbook, a full understanding of what they can expect from the programme, impartial pre-course IAG, a thorough understanding of their responsibilities towards Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Prevent, the British Values and Health and Safety amongst other topics.

The learners are then required to indicate which areas have been covered within their induction in the Personal Learning Plan. Rather than this being a simple tick-list of activities that the learner completes they are also required to give a fuller description of their understanding of Safeguarding, Prevent, the British Values and Equality and Diversity to evidence that this has been fully embedded within their long-term memory and learning.

A course directory is published within the [Skills South Tyneside website](#) to support potential learners and referral partners. Course overview documents will be issued as part of the contract clarification process. It is important that a robust course overview is completed by providers which give insight into course content, progression potential and delivery details and this will be added to the website.

Alongside the website, courses are promoted on the [Skills South Tyneside Facebook page](#). The aim of the site is to:

- Engage/recruit new learners to Skills South Tyneside provision
- Engage with current learners across the provision
- Support and signpost current learners with employment and wellbeing resources
- Signpost previous learners into employment or further learning

It is encouraged that providers promote the Facebook page to learners as part of the induction process as well as including the page in their own marketing and promotion activity.

Progress Tracking

Progress tracking should enable providers and Skills South Tyneside to evaluate learners' progress compared with their starting points, based on their rate of learning, acquisition of knowledge, skills and behaviours and whether they have achieved their individualised, challenging targets.

The Service requires providers work with learners to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are tailored to enable all learners to make good progress and prepare for their next steps. Assessments and reviews need to be timely, frequent, fair, informative and reliable.

The Personal Learning Plan must be used to record personal progress of learners. Specifically, it must:

- Review and agree learners' individual learning goals.
- Review the tutor's delivery strategies for individuals or groups of learners.
- Identify learners at risk of falling behind, support learners to progress and achieve
- Ensure that formative assessment takes place regularly to review progress against the learner's goals.
- Achievement and progress in English and maths is evident, where appropriate.

Additionally, providers must complete and return the bi-monthly progress tracker upon request to Employment and Skills Officers.

Teaching and Learning

Skills South Tyneside wants all learners to have the best possible experience. To achieve this, teaching and assessment methods and resources must inspire and challenge all learners and meet their different needs, including the most able and the most disadvantaged.

Providers must be able to demonstrate the impact that they are having on learning and evidence the extent to which:

- Tutors have relevant teaching qualifications and sector subject specialism as required by Skills South Tyneside.
- A comprehensive approach to Continuous Professional Development is in place for all staff.
- The planning of learning is effective.
- Records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment or support, information and advice sessions are maintained.
- Arrangements for observing teaching, learning and assessments and reviewing learners' work at employer premises are maintained, where appropriate.
- Learning materials are evaluated and used by learners.
- Technology is used to deliver and assess learning.
- Teaching impacts on learning, skills development and behaviours.

Skills South Tyneside requires that all learning undertaken, whether it be accredited or non-accredited, allows learners to use knowledge fluently, to develop their understanding, and to gain, extend and improve their skills and not simply memorise disconnected facts. It is imperative that the curriculum is sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what learners know and can do and learners can work towards defined end points.

Verification, Assessment and Achievement

For regulated programmes, providers must demonstrate awarding body approval and compliance with their audit requirements.

For non-regulated programmes, providers must treat non-regulated provision with the same rigour as accredited provision. Providers must demonstrate procedures to ensure that the outcomes, achievement and delivery of non-regulation provision are in line with both national inspection requirements and key local commissioning priorities.

Progression and Destinations

Aligned to the impact element of the Education Inspection Framework, Skills South Tyneside aims to ensure that all learners gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, aspirations and the intention of their course of study.

Following completion of their course it is important to demonstrate that learners are ready for the next stage and are going to appropriate, high-quality destinations such as higher-level learning and/or into sustained employment or gain promotion at work.

Providers must evidence the extent to which they monitor the progression and destinations of learners (including whether learners enter secure and sustained employment) and use this information to improve provision.

Learner destinations must be tracked, recorded and submitted quarterly. All learners who have left in the previous quarter will remain in scope for the rest of the academic year, or until they have are employed.

Embedding Key Themes

The Key Themes are: maths, English, ICT, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Safeguarding, Prevent, Climate, Health and Safety and the British Values.

Improving the core skills of learners is a key priority for Skills South Tyneside and providers must demonstrate that the curriculum extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational. It must provide for learners' broader development, enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents.

The Service recognises that low attainment in maths, English and ICT skills in particular can lead to barriers to further education and employment so all providers must make it a strategic priority to give learners the opportunity within every course they undertake to improve these basic skills.

Understanding the key themes can enrich the lives of learners by improving their wider knowledge and understanding beyond the course they're undertaking so the Service sends out monthly resources that tutors can use in the form of our Embedding Key Themes documents. These resources are articles on topical subjects with a range of activities or questions for learners included and are designed to fit seamlessly within any session.

These resources aim to prepare learners for life in modern Britain by equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society and develop their understanding and appreciation of diversity.

By ensuring that the key themes are reflected within planning documentation, personal learning plans, displayed within classrooms and by using the resources supplied by Skills South Tyneside with learners it will evidence how providers fully embed these key themes within their ethos and values.

The Service also uploads the monthly resources to the provider section of our website so there is a **bank of resources** that providers can access at any time.

Schemes of Work & Lesson Plans

Effective schemes of work and lesson plans support tutors to plan and deliver learning appropriate for learners of all abilities, reflects good industry practice and helps to embed key themes within sessions supporting learners to gain the most they can from their learning.

Planning documentation is used to demonstrate that the provider has planned and sequenced the curriculum so that learners can build on previous teaching and learning and develop the new knowledge and skills they need. Curriculum planning should allow learners to benefit from high academic, technical and vocational ambitions. This means that the curriculum should be ambitious for disadvantaged learners or those with SEND, including those who have high needs, and should meet those needs.

Skills South Tyneside provides templates for schemes of work and lesson plans. The content of scheme of works and lesson plans should match the standard documentation; however, providers may submit their own in-house documentation provided it meets the Service's expectations and have sought approval to do so through Employment and Skills Officers.

The Service requests that all providers' quality assure and approve the schemes of work and lesson plans submitted as part of their own quality assurance arrangements. Schemes of work and lesson plans should be submitted for each schedule that providers are approved to deliver either at contract clarification or 14 days in advance of delivery for any schedules that have been awarded in-year.

[Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan Process Chart](#)



Safeguarding

Skills South Tyneside is committed to ensuring that all learners are safe and protected from all forms of abuse and neglect and will promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults within our service area. Where a commissioned provider or a member of their staff has a concern about a learner because of something they have observed or heard about from a third party a Skills South Tyneside Safeguarding Incident/Concerns Form must be completed and returned to Skills South Tyneside using the following email address – skillsconcerns@southtyneside.gov.uk.

Completion of this form must not delay any consultation with Children/Adult Services or police over concerns of a serious nature.

All disclosures/concerns should be discussed with the designated safeguarding lead in an individual's organisation who will follow their own Prevent policy and/or safeguarding policies and procedures which must complement South Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board procedures for children and young people aged 0-18.

Skills South Tyneside Safeguarding Policy is available on the Skills South Tyneside provider section of the [website](#)

Safeguarding Process Chart

Safeguarding and Prevent Reviews

Skills South Tyneside undertakes annual Safeguarding and Prevent Reviews with each provider. The purpose of Safeguarding and Prevent reviews are to ensure that provider's organisational procedures, practices and delivery of training and education meet their legal and contractual obligations to ensure learners are safe and protected from all forms of abuse. The process is intended to be collaborative with the aim of supporting providers to continuously improve and demonstrate outstanding performance.

The reviews will focus on validating statements made at commissioning and the Safeguarding and Prevent self-assessments. Safeguarding and Prevent reviews can be undertaken remotely with Providers being issued a link to the One Drive system to upload the evidence required to undertake the review including details on what naming conventions should be used for all files.

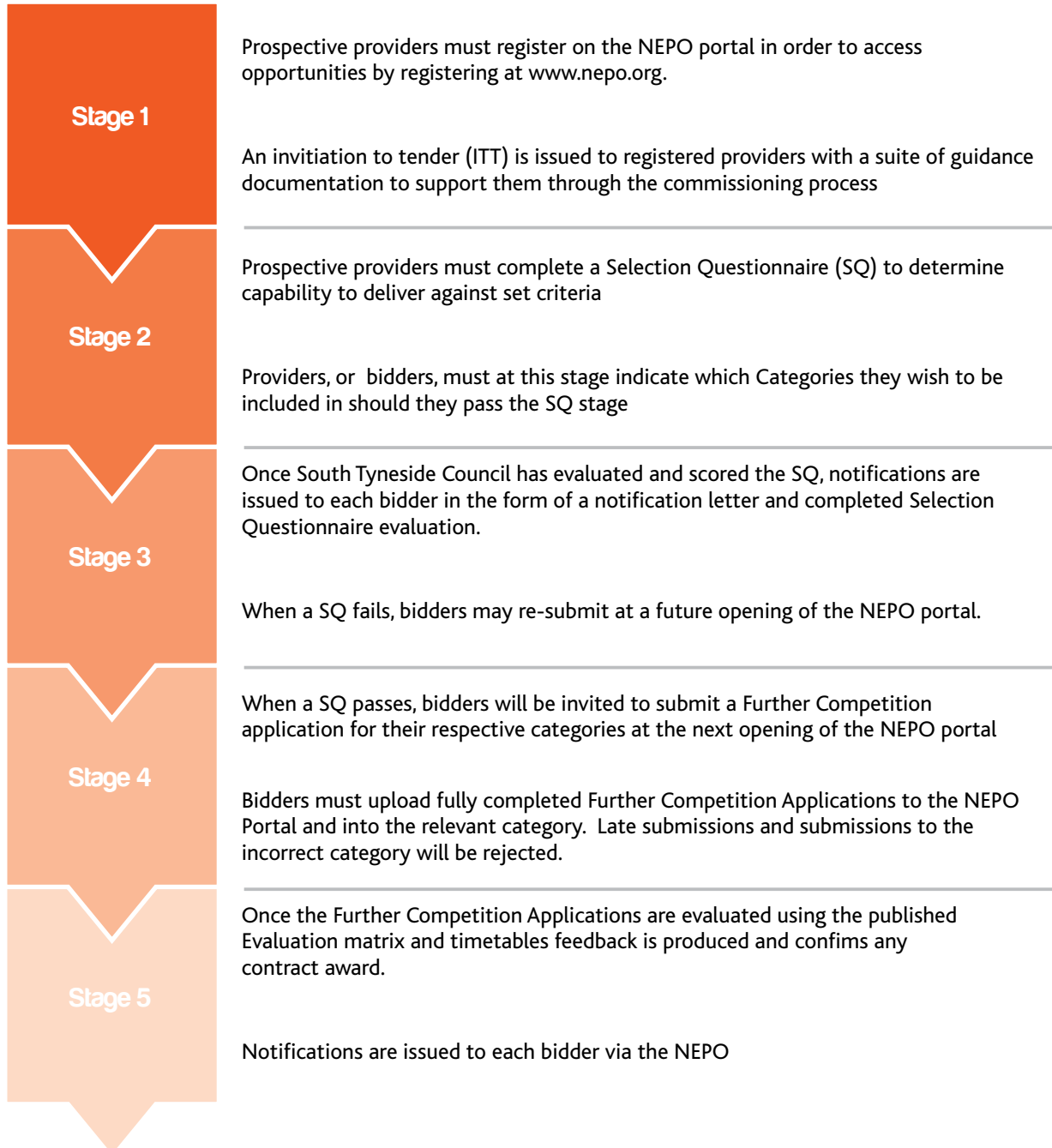
In advance of the Safeguarding and Prevent review providers will be asked to prepare evidence for the visit. Prior to the visit the Service will review any information which has been submitted during the previous academic year and through contract clarification, and if any of the requested information has already been submitted providers will not be required to resubmit. If any of the information requested can't be provided this will be added to the provider action plan.

The visit will be carried out by a representative from the Safeguarding Team within Skills South Tyneside and relevant provider staff. The findings from the visit will be provided, with any actions fed into the provider action plan. Progress against the identified actions will be reviewed at the regular contract meetings.

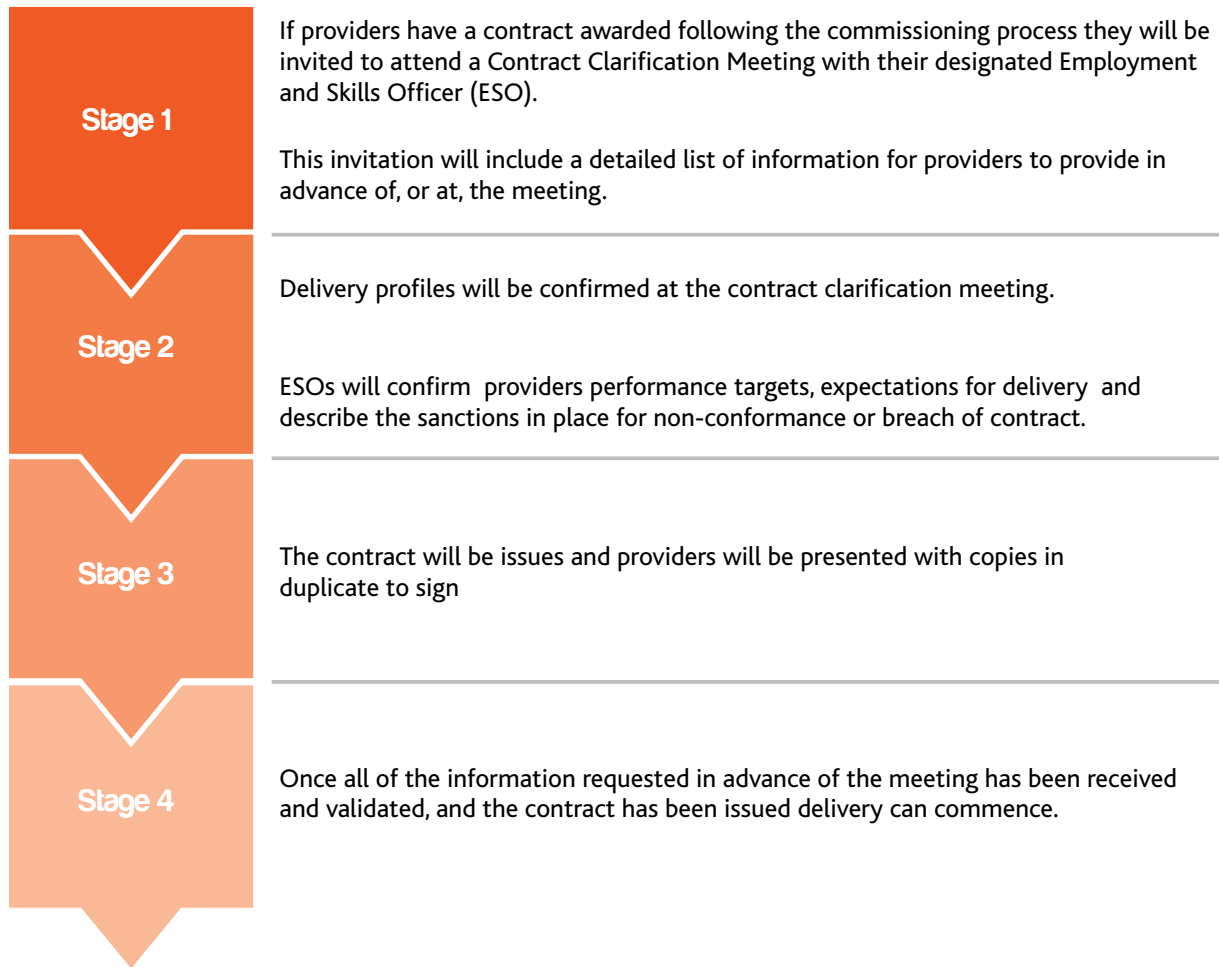
Safeguarding and Prevent Review Process Map

Process Flow Charts & Key Documents

Commissioning Process



Contract Clarification Process Chart



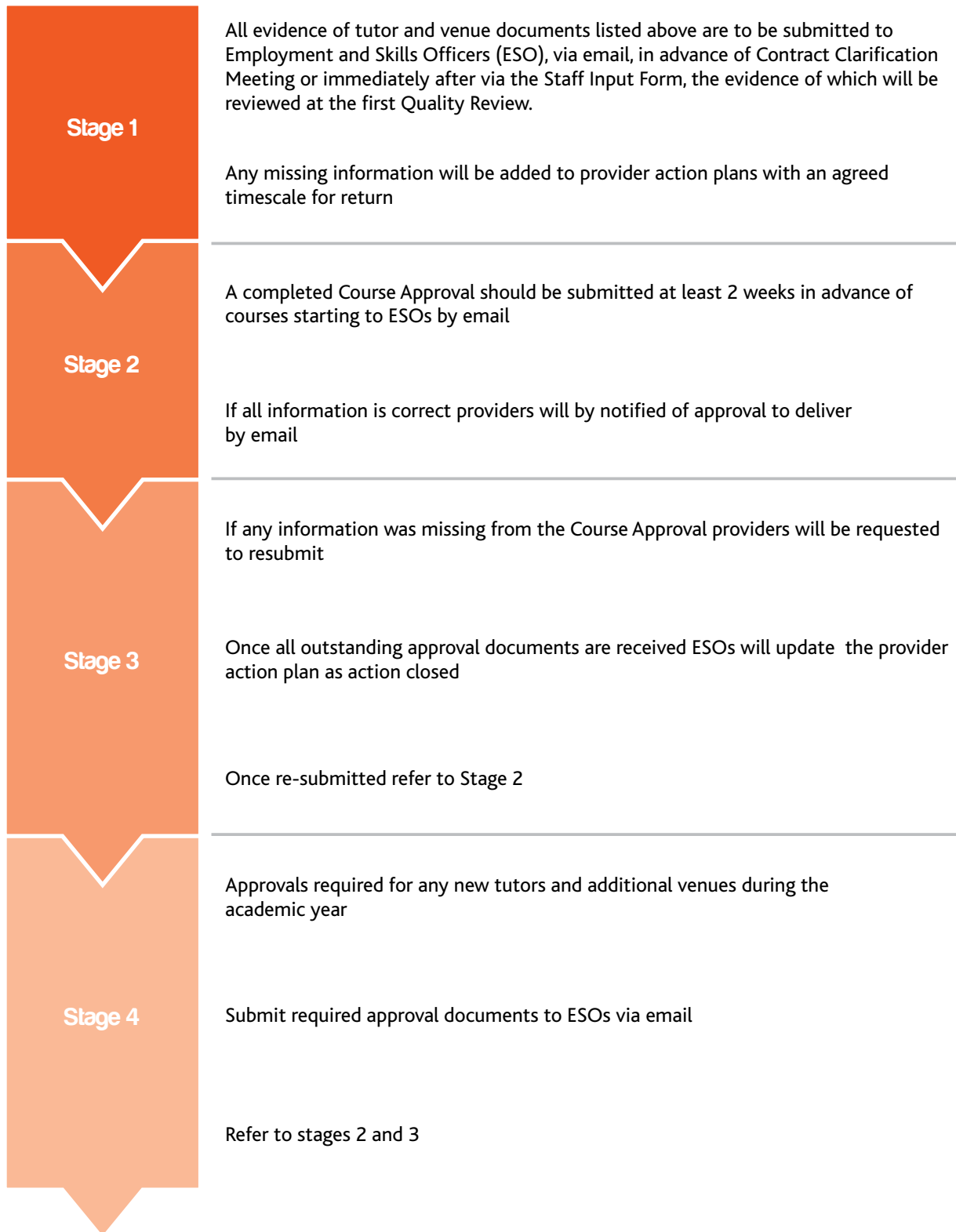
Key Documents

Provider Staff Details Form

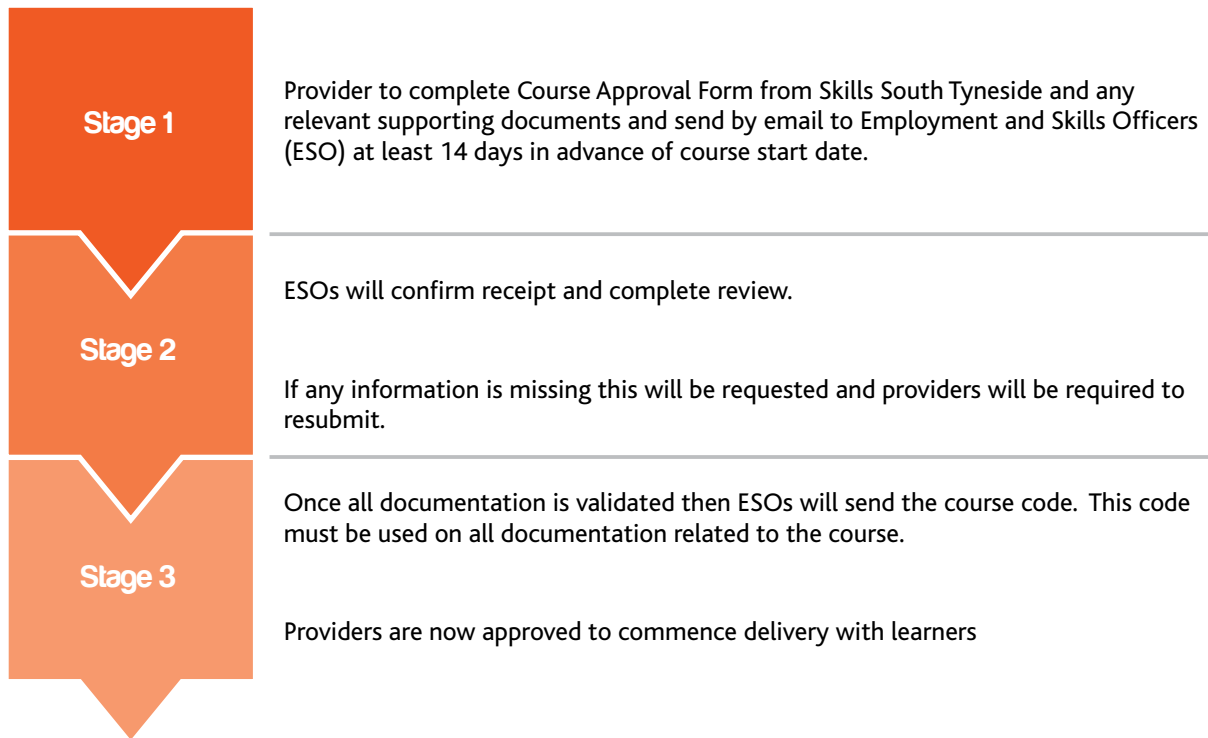
Safer Recruitment Policy

External Speakers Policy

Tutor and Venue Delivery Information Process



Course Approval Process



Key Documents

Course Approval Form

Scheme of Work Template

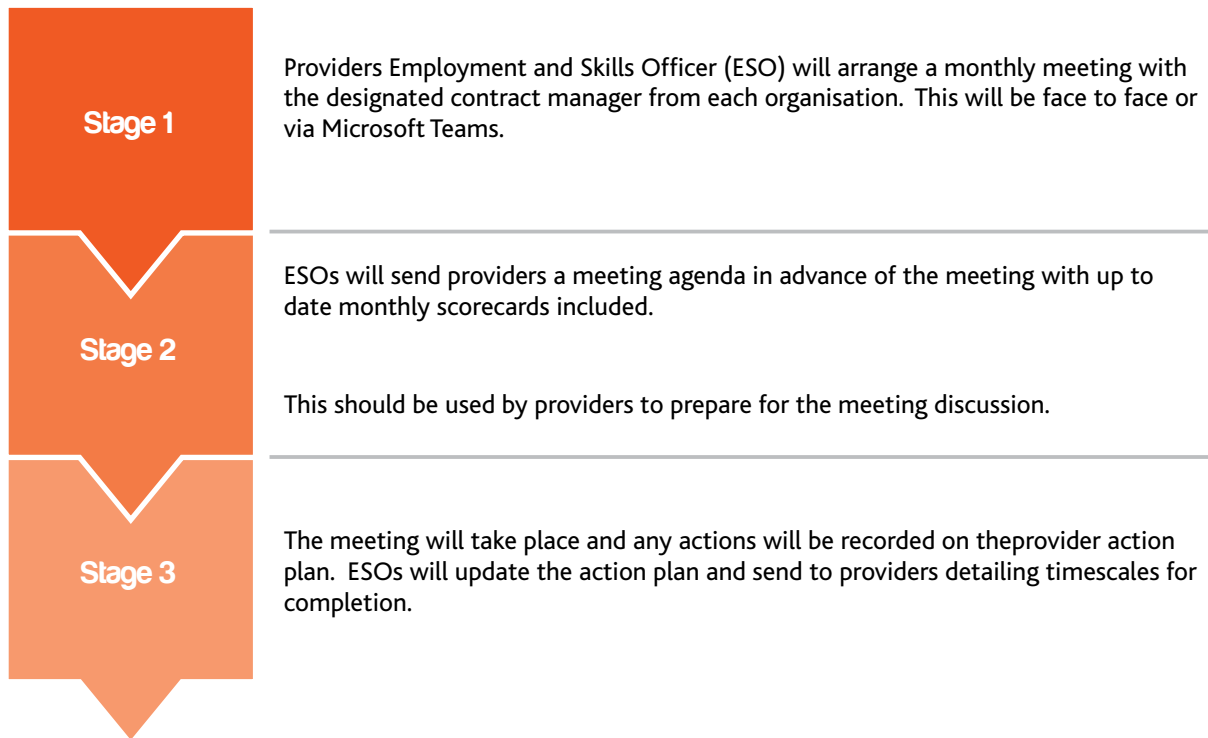
Lesson Plan Template

5 Minute Lesson Plan

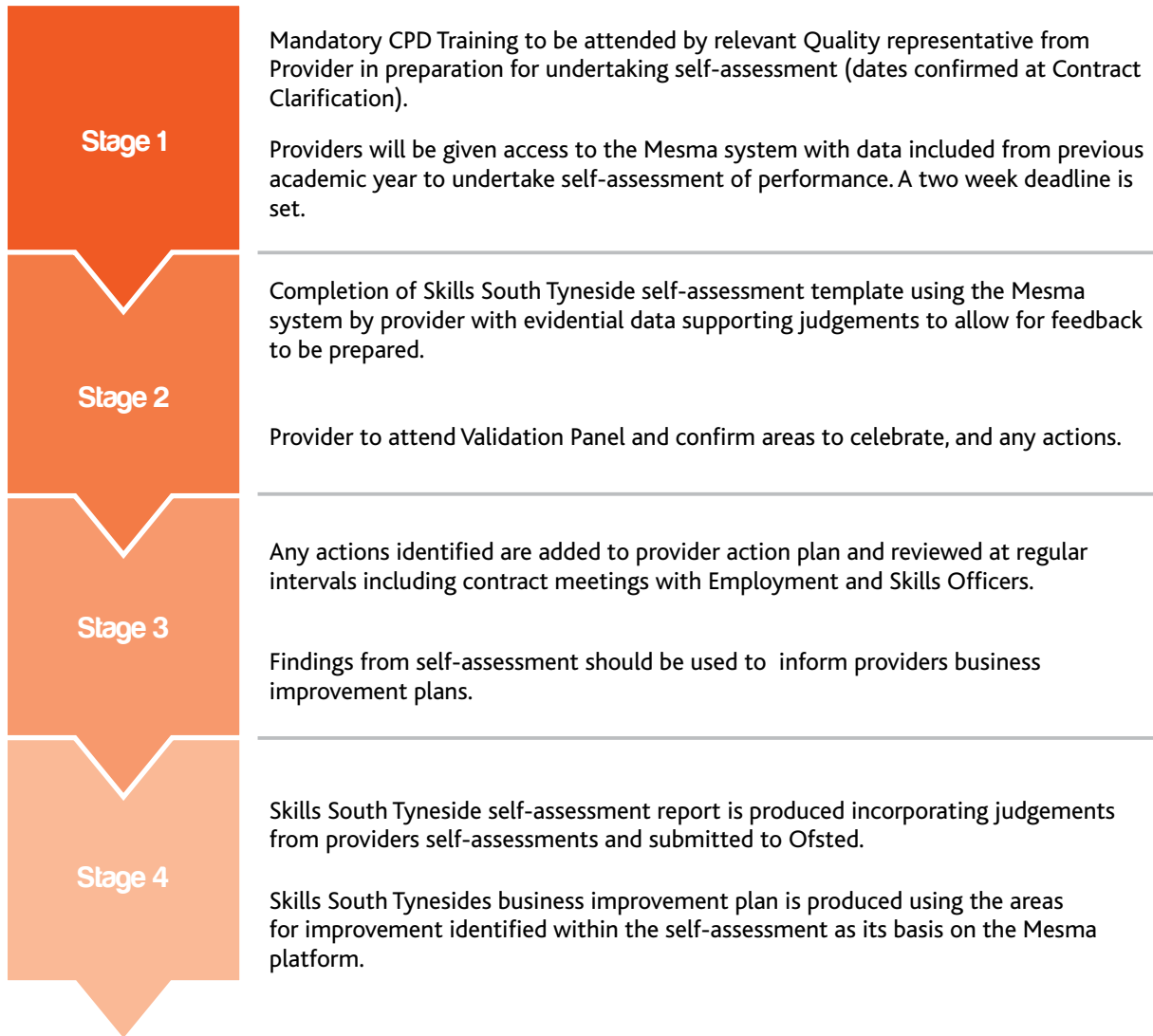
Venue Risk Assessment Template

Tutor Risk Assessment Template

Performance Review and Monthly Meetings Process



Self-Assessment Process

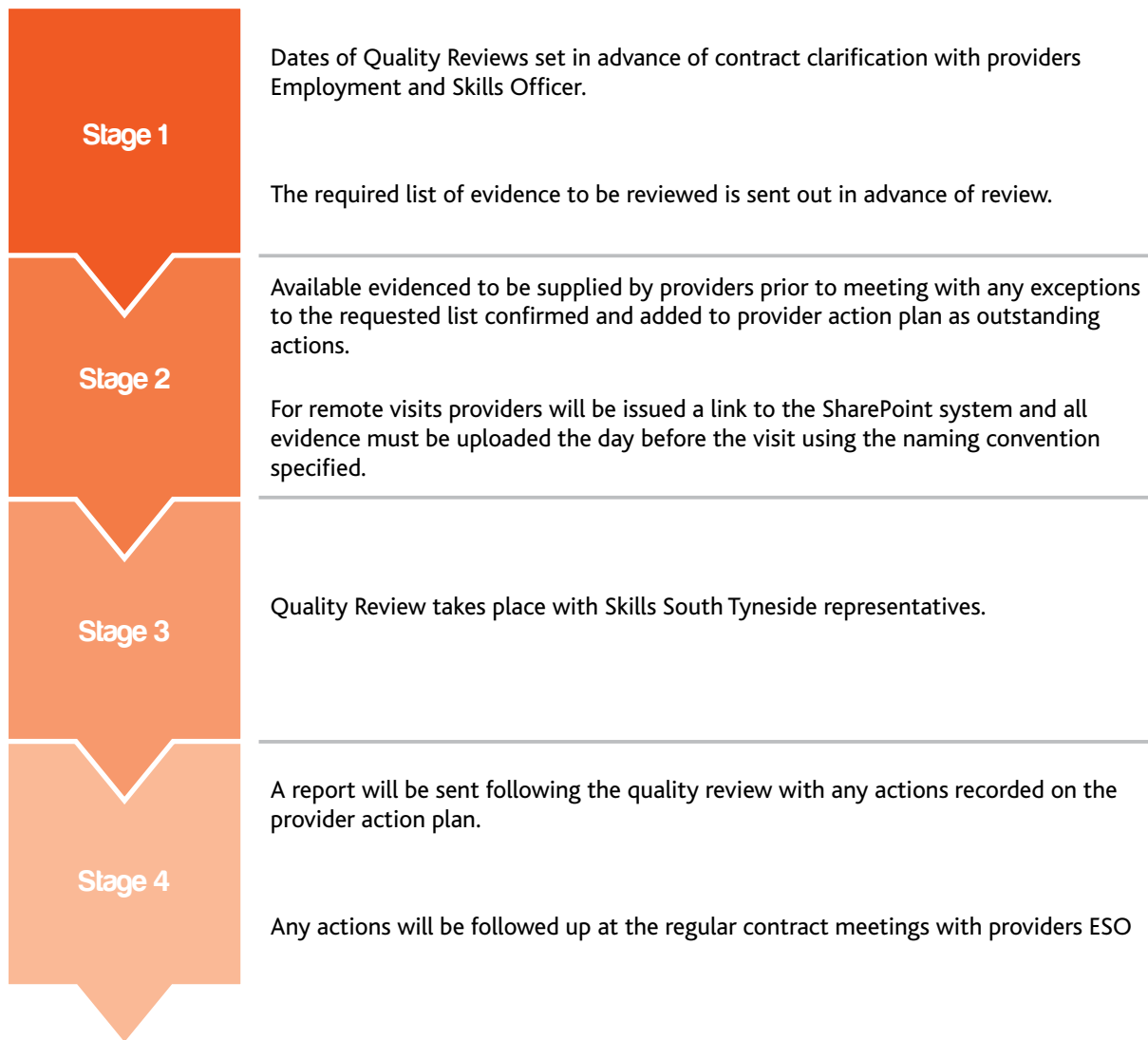


Key Documents

Provider Self-Assessment Template

[Further Education and Skills Handbook](#)

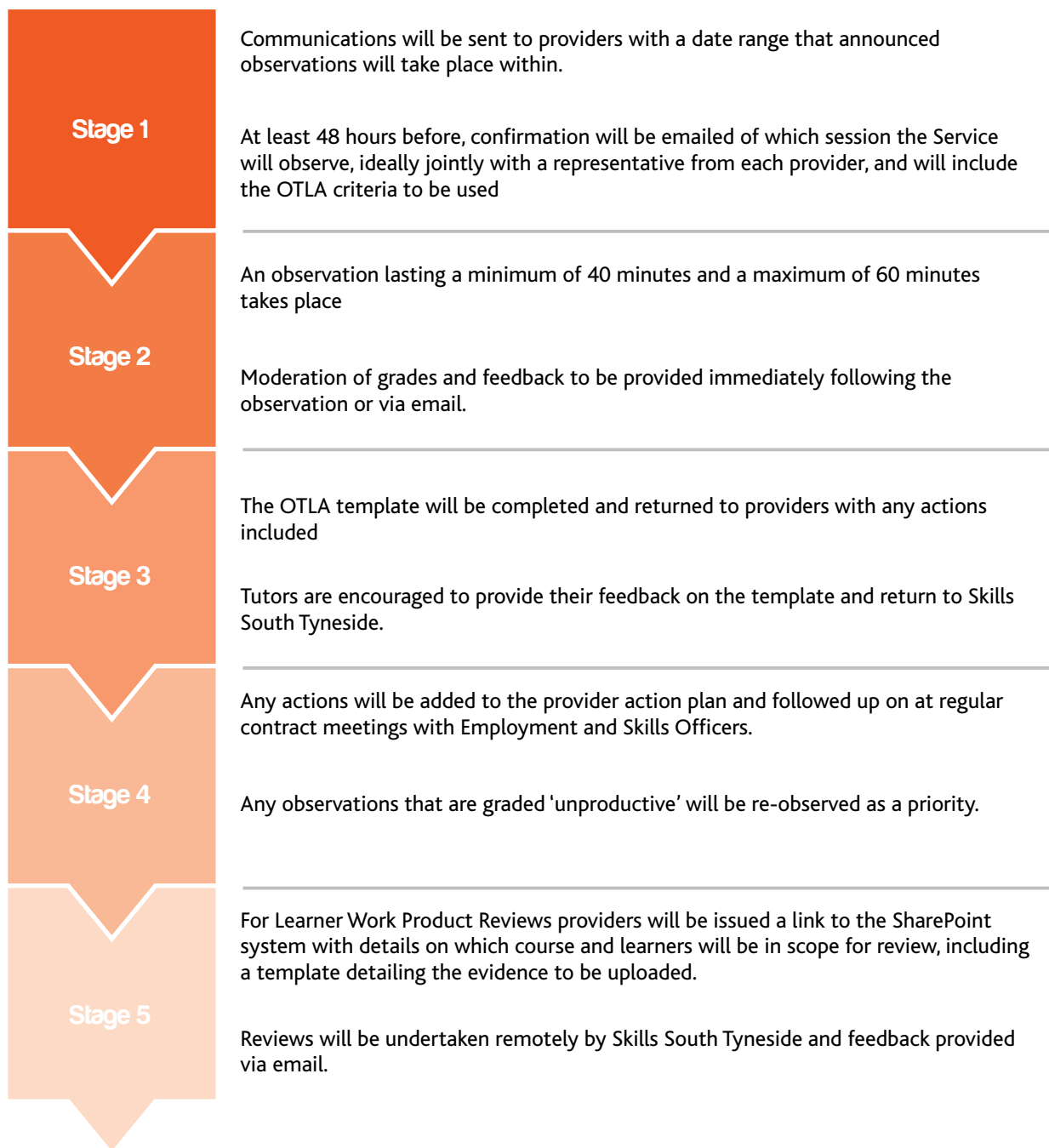
Quality Review Process



Key Documents

Quality Review Template

Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process



Key Documents

Lesson Observation Template

Learner Work Product Review Template

Lesson Observation Policy

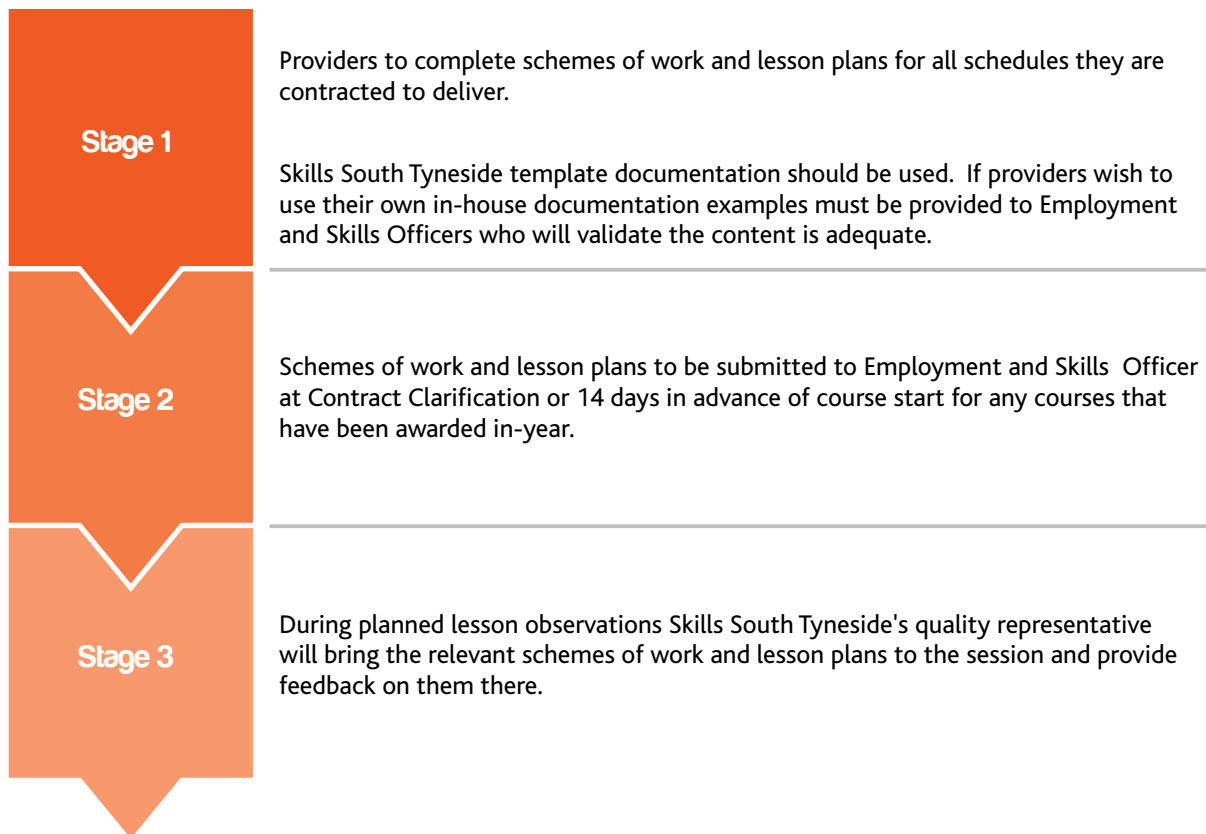
Scheme of Work Template

Lesson Plan Template

5 Minute Lesson Plan

Embedding Key Themes

Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan Process



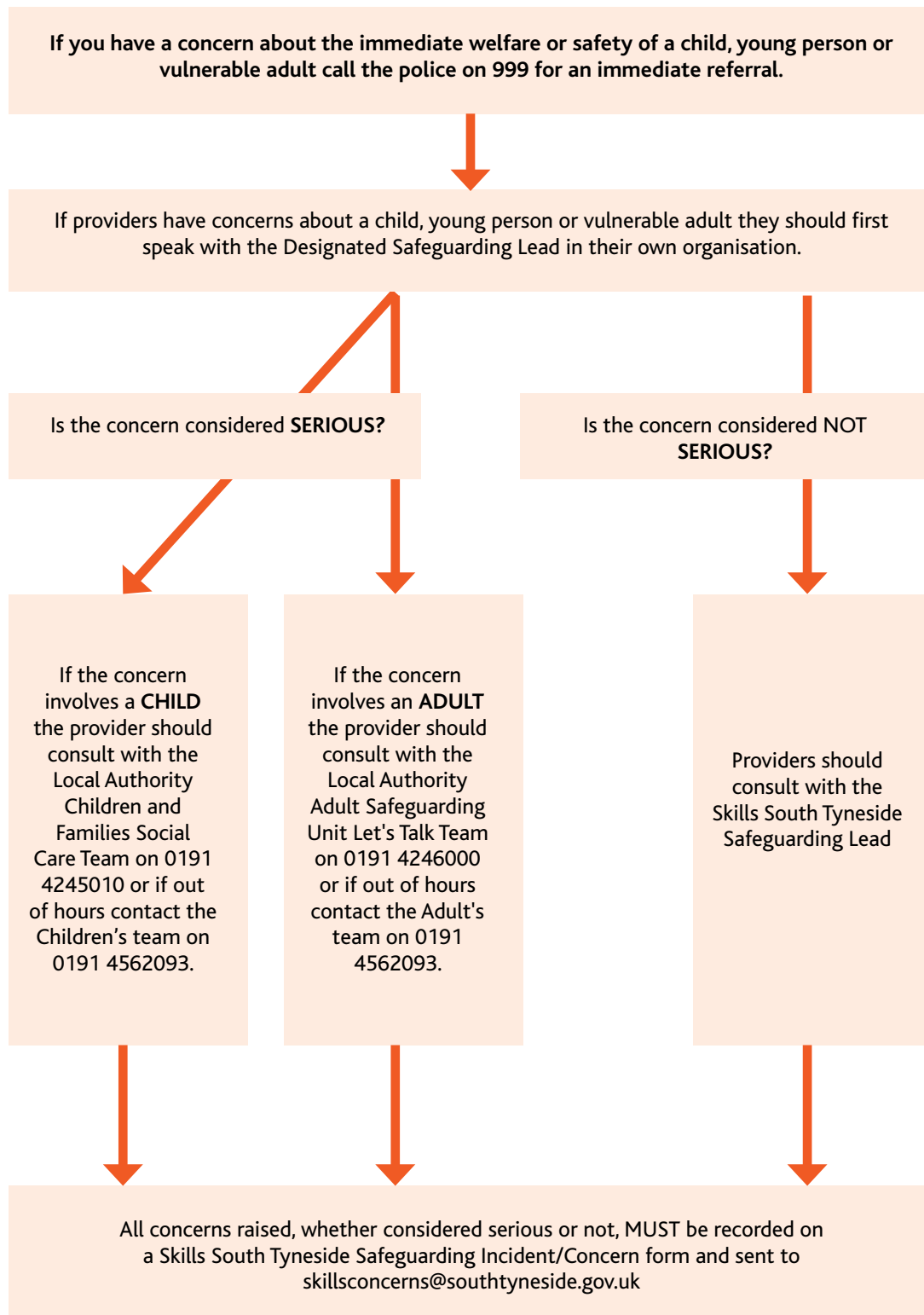
Key Documentation

Scheme of Work Template

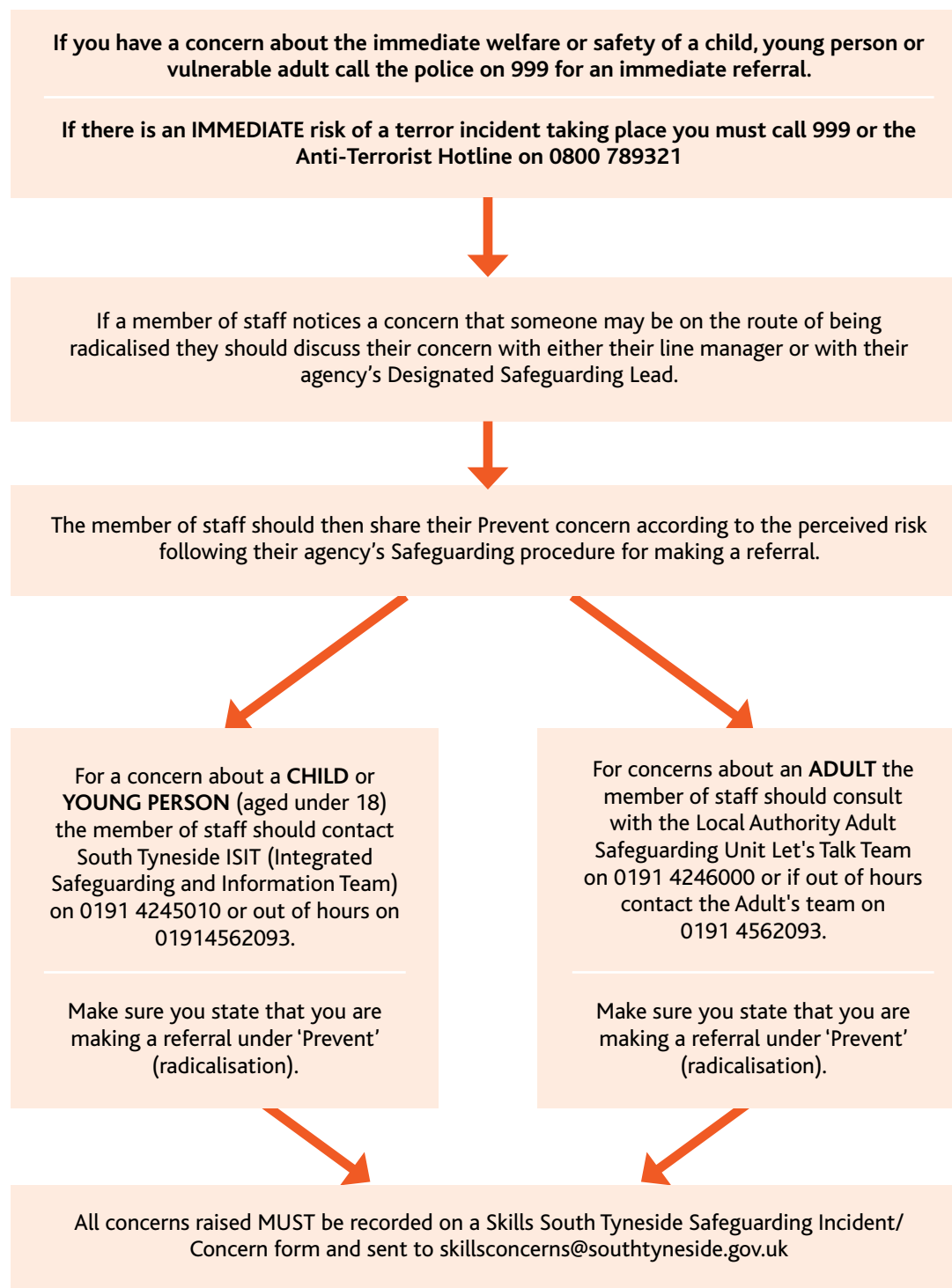
Lesson Plan Template

Safeguarding Incident/Concerns Processes

Referral of Suspected Abuse or Neglect



Reporting a Prevent Concern for a Vulnerable Person



Key Documents

Designated Safeguarding Lead Declaration

Safeguarding Incident Concern Form

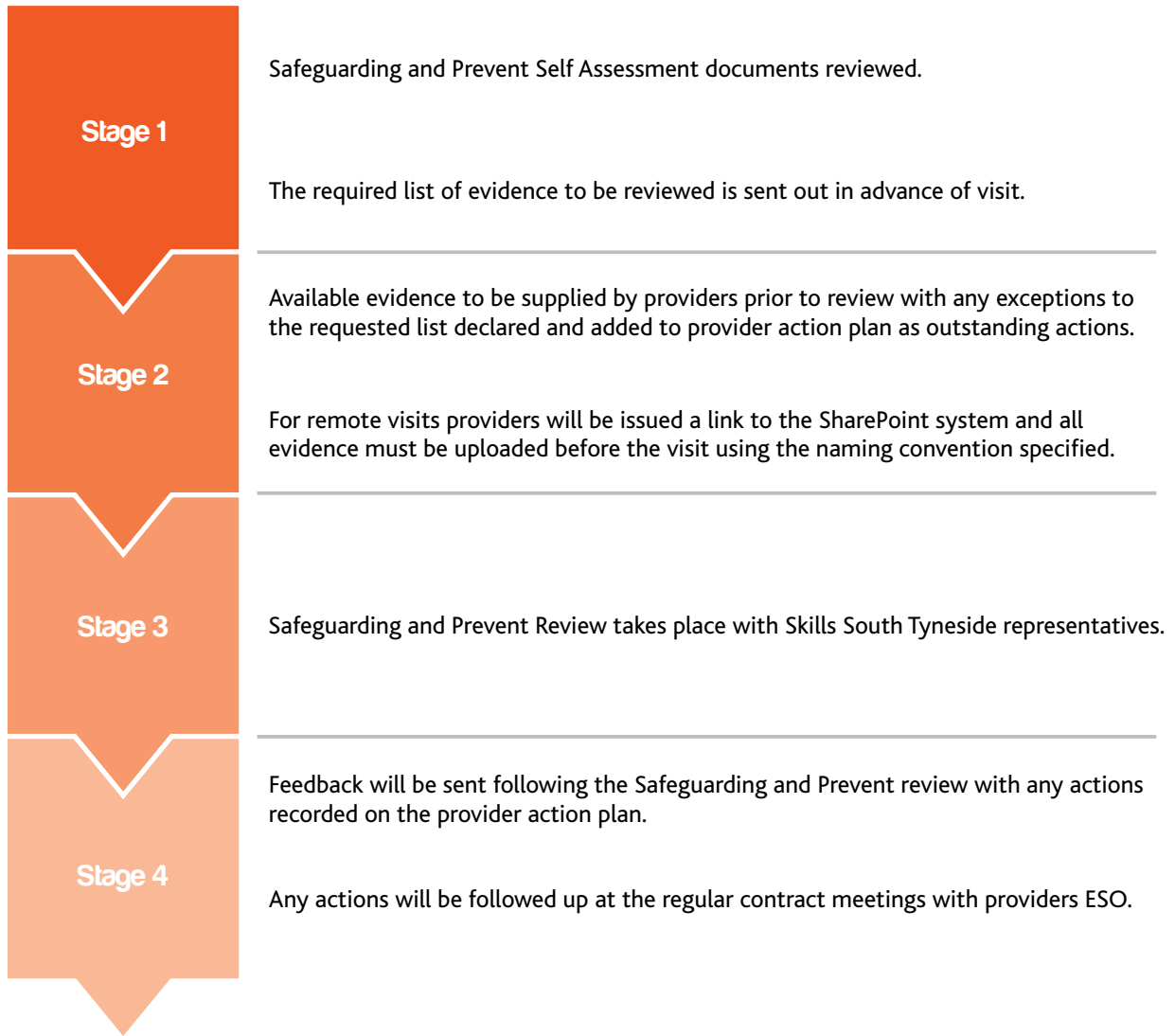
Learner Comments Form

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults Practice Guidance

Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy

Safeguarding and Prevent Review Process



Key Documents

Safeguarding and Prevent Review Template