



merlin

promoting supply chain excellence

Assessment Report
For

ADVIZA

By Ruth Regan

On behalf of emqc Ltd

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About the Organisation

Adviza is a registered charity formerly known as Connexions Thames Valley. Its aim is to inspire people to make better decisions that help them progress in learning and work. A particular focus is helping young people progress in education, employment and training.

As well as delivering projects on behalf of local authorities, other public bodies and charities, a key part of their work is providing careers services direct to schools, colleges, parents, graduates and other individuals.

Adviza is also part of the reachfor organisation - a social enterprise formed by like-minded organisations throughout England who deliver services to young people and adults. reachfor's consortium approach aims to give members access to wider markets than they could access alone, to simplify commissioning and contracting for funders and to provide a vehicle for members to share services and learning to increase both efficiency and service quality.

As well as delivering careers services to schools and colleges across the Thames Valley and other areas, Adviza delivers the Connexions Berkshire, Connexions Buckinghamshire and Connexions Oxfordshire services. Other services offered to young people through Adviza include the National Citizens Service, Prince's Trust TEAM Programme, European Social Fund (ESF) LEAP Project, Energise Programme and residential and activity days.

Supply Chain Partners enable Adviza to deliver the Connexions Buckinghamshire contract; the LEAP, Energise and TEAM projects; and the residential and activity days.

Assessment Methodology

An initial meeting was held in September 2013 where the scope of the Merlin Standard was discussed and agreed in accordance with the agreed guidelines.

All Supply Chain Partners involved in supporting Adviza deliver their services were informed of the date for the assessment via the '*Adviza Supplying Support Newsletter*'.

The assessment team (lead Assessor Ruth Regan and team Assessor Neil Potentier) interviewed representatives from 10 Supply Chain Partner organisations, including one organisation which had recently left the partnership. The sample included representatives of organisations who deliver the range of services and projects on behalf of Adviza, including 'spot purchase' residential and activity day providers.

As part of the Assessment Adviza personnel were interviewed, including those involved in the strategic and day-to-day development and management of the Supply Chain Partners, together with a representative of the reachfor finance team which manages the payment of Supply Chain Partners on behalf of Adviza and the consortium.

During the assessment, a number of written documents were made available for the team to review, including those relating to supply chain design, improvement plans, environmental sustainability, TUPE, communications and contract / performance management.

Assessment Outcome

Overall %	61%
Overall Outcome	Satisfactory
Supply Chain Design	Satisfactory
Commitment	Satisfactory
Conduct	Satisfactory
Review	Satisfactory

Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during this Merlin assessment and a summary of these is given below. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

- ▲ Adviza is well established within the geographical areas in which it currently operates which means that organisations are keen to work with it. (1a.1 & 4a.1)
- ▲ The supply chain considers Adviza's approach to one-to-one communication to be a particular strength. This is due to the open and honest relationships established at an operational level. Partners believe that all interactions are positive and supportive. (2a.4, 2a.5 & 3a.3)
- ▲ The role Adviza plays in actively supporting the growth and development of Supply Chain Partners, including supporting them to access additional funding streams, is recognised and appreciated by the supply chain. (2b.1 & 2b.2)
- ▲ Contractual documentation produced by Adviza is seen as being fit for purpose. (2c.3)
- ▲ The systems and processes developed to ensure partners are accurately paid are - once fully understood by the partner organisations - appreciated. Supply Chain Partners believe they are paid accurately and on time. (2c.7)
- ▲ Strong procedures are in place across the supply chain to ensure that the security of personal data relating to clients is maintained. (3b.4)
- ▲ Supply Chain Partners are fully aware of the importance placed on measuring the progress of clients, and use a variety of methods to ensure this process is as robust as it can be. (3d.6)
- ▲ Partners believe they are having a very positive impact on the wider objectives / policy intent of the commissioner. They were able to share many anecdotal examples about improving the lives of young people they were engaging with. (4a.3, 4a.6)

Areas for Improvement

In order to support the organisation to further develop and improve its supply chain delivery strategy, the following suggestions for improvement are made by the assessment team.

- ▲ Continue to review the holistic needs of stakeholders and customer groups and ensure the supply chain meets their needs. (1a.1, 4a.5)
- ▲ While individual projects have publicised lists of organisations who can offer support outside of the supply chain (the Specialist Provision Directory for the LEAP Project for example), more could and should be made of the extensive support networks used across the supply chain as a whole. Consideration should be given to developing, sharing and maintaining a more formal resource directory and encouraging Supply Chain Partners to share how these additional services / organisations have been used to support clients. (1a.3)
- ▲ Collaboration, the sharing of good practice, etc. takes place within the silos of the individual contracts and projects delivered by Adviza and its supply chain. Processes need to be developed to widen this to the supply chain as a whole – with Adviza being seen by the supply chain as taking a lead in making this happen. (2a.3 & 3d.1, 3d.3)
- ▲ For future contracts, consideration should be given to designing a number of flexible funding models and negotiating options with all partners. (2c.2, 2c.5, 2c.6)
- ▲ Consider what can be done to ensure that all organisations joining the supply chain understand the concept of 'market share' and how they contribute to the overall contract. (2c.4)
- ▲ While Adviza's vision and values are widely publicised and do reflect how it operates as an organisation, more needs to be done to ensure that there is an acknowledged set of core principles which govern the way the supply chain is managed. Consider if, working with the supply chain, the production of a Supply Chain Charter or a Supply Chain Code of Business Ethics would be beneficial. (3a.1)
- ▲ Information is shared with Supply Chain Partners on changes to legislative and regulatory requirements, but not all partners confirm that this information is being read and therefore actioned. Systems need to be introduced to monitor how this information is received and actioned by the supply chain. (3a.4)
- ▲ Continue to review the range of processes relating to the monitoring of quality. Ensure that the system remains fit for purpose across all contracts and projects and that the findings are proactively used to improve the service delivery across the supply chain as a whole. (3b.1 & 3b.2)
- ▲ Consider how the excellent practice that is already appearing within the supply chain around health and safety, safeguarding and data protection can be more formally identified, documented, better utilised, shared and measured for effectiveness. (3b)

- ▲ Develop a strategic approach to ensuring environmental sustainability is embedded and monitored across the supply chain. This needs to include the setting of improvement targets that can be demonstrated across the individual supply chain organisations and across the supply chain as a whole. (3b.7, 4a.3, 4a.6)
- ▲ The supply chain would benefit from having clear definitions / examples from Adviza of 'excellent practice', 'innovation' and 'value for money'. (3b.8, 3d.2, 3d.5)
- ▲ Periodically remind Supply Chain Partners of the Merlin Mediation Service. (3c.3)
- ▲ Within the individual silos of contracts and projects there is an understanding of what each party is / should be doing – and this has emerged over a period of time. The supply chain would benefit from having a greater understanding of how the individual organisations are contributing to their contracts and to the wider Adviza supply chain. (3c.4)
- ▲ Continue to ensure that all Supply Chain Partners, regardless of the size of their contribution to the overall supply chain, are clear about what you expect of them in terms of performance. (3d.3)
- ▲ When further developing the annual self-assessment report and improvement plan, Adviza would benefit from proactively gaining feedback from all stakeholders and partners, and where appropriate involving them in the development of the self-assessment. (4a.2)
- ▲ Consider how all partners can be kept informed of the wider objectives of the commissioners and ensure they develop their own impact measures to support these objectives, and that successes are shared. (4a.3 & 4a.4)
- ▲ Further evidence, beyond the anecdotal, needs to be gathered regarding the positive and measurable impact that the activities of the supply chain are having on external stakeholders, customer well-being and environmental sustainability. (4a.6)

Areas Requiring Further Development

Because Adviza has met the Merlin Standard, as described in the Assessment Outcome above, there are no areas for development identified as requiring immediate action in order to gain accreditation.

However, the leadership team should consider what actions they can take to address the Areas for Improvement highlighted above in order to continue to seek excellence in all their supply chain management activities.

Assessment Findings

1 Supply Chain Design

1a) Supply chain design

As an organisation, Adviza is well established within the geographic areas it serves and has worked closely with relevant commissioners and delivery organisations over a number of years. To support the 'grass-roots' knowledge it has of its clients their needs are further identified in a variety of ways, including national and local labour market information using data available from JobCentre Plus, Department for Education Statistical Neighbour data, education data and academic research. Based on this knowledge, Adviza is proactive in encouraging organisations with the required capacity, capability and delivery track record to consider becoming part of their delivery network.

Within some areas the commissioner has been specific about which organisations could be contracted with, and Adviza worked to engage with these organisations and to identify those with whom it felt it could develop strong and effective partnerships in order to meet the needs of the defined customer groups.

In September 2013, the Adviza Senior Leadership Team reviewed the company's approach to engaging with Supply Chain Partners and this five-stage approach (preparing the specification, advertising, evaluating tenders, post tender negotiations and preparing and finalising contracts) gives the whole procurement process much more structure and gravitas.

- ▲ *"...we have a specialism so we look for partners who can deliver in geographical areas in which we don't operate and have specialisms that we don't."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we look at the needs of the customer, what we can offer them and then what's missing – that's where we look for variety and scope within the partnership."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...the SFA (Skills Funding Agency) would want to know if we wanted to make changes to the supply chain."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we were contacted by Adviza to see if we were interested in working with them – we have specialisms that they don't."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we know what the young people need but Adviza made it clear what the commissioners wanted from the contract."* – Supply Chain Partner

Across all contracts and projects, Adviza has utilised a mix of organisational sectors, sizes and geographical bases, which enables them to provide a holistic service to their commissioners. The make-up of the supply chain has been flexed to respond to changing needs of the client group and the performance of partner organisations. Within each contract stream, partner organisations are aware of other delivery partners and what services they offer.

Many of the Supply Chain Partners have their own networks which they use to support their delivery and therefore add value to the overall partnership. Adviza is also very well connected within the geographical areas it operates in and makes efforts to ensure it is engaged in both formal and informal networks within these areas. There are more benefits to be had of sharing and promoting all these wider network contact details across the Supply Chain Partnership as a whole.

- ▲ *"...we looked at what was missing and for example approached xxx for additional services and support."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have our own network of organisations that we informed Adviza of when we contracted with them – they did want to know about our additional referral agencies."* – Supply Chain Partner

2 Commitment

2a) Collaboration, cooperation and communication

Supply Chain Partners who had experience of the procurement process used by Adviza confirmed that communications during all stages of activity were proactive and relevant and proportionate to the service being procured. There is some variation in approach between contracts due to the requirements of the commissioners and this was acknowledged by Adviza and understood by their Supply Chain Partners.

- ▲ *"...we met with potential partners numerous times to ensure they were focused on the contract deliverables."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we tried to ensure everyone received the same information at the same time to ensure no one was disadvantaged during the process."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we've had extensive communications prior to and post contract – now have a three year contract in place."* – Supply Chain Partner

Examples were shared of how consultation with Supply Chain Partners has informed decisions made by Adviza. For example based on consultation with Buckinghamshire-based partners, the structure of support has been revised to provide more locally based support to Supply Chain Partners. Partners within the Adviza network have been asked for feedback on what developments they would like to see on the corporate website.

- ▲ *"...consultation can be limited due to contract requirements – Adviza were clear about what paperwork was needed and why – we provided what they needed as it was linked to ESF funding – they will ask where possible or relevant."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...created a way of working with the booking systems so we now have a system that works."* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners believe Adviza wants collaboration across its network of providers, and collaboration is evident within the individual contracts and projects through the regular meeting structure and participation in action learning sets. In addition, partners described how they were proactive at collaborating within their own networks to support the delivery of comprehensive services.

- ▲ *"...we have different contracts – and we will hold meetings with the SCP organisations delivering each contract so that they visit each other's premises and get to know what they deliver."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...they arranged key worker network meetings from across the different partner organisations."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...encouraged to work collaboratively within contract."* – Supply Chain Partner

Communications channels between Adviza and all its Supply Chain Partners are clear and understood – as are the business relationships. Where there has been ambiguity or confusion and clarification needed it has been between Supply Chain Partners working together to support the contract delivery, and Adviza has intervened where necessary and clarified the business relationship.

- ▲ *"...we endeavour to be open, honest and transparent in all our relationships, our mission is about working collaboratively to make a positive difference to the young people."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...it's important that we communicate to staff what contract we have so they can cross-inform and share with each other."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...excellent relationship – it's been brilliant for us."* – Supply Chain Partner

Within the established communication protocols, Supply Chain Partners confirmed that they believe the culture across their partnership network is one where two-way communication is the norm. All those interviewed highlighted the effectiveness of the inter-personnel relationships between Adviza staff and those of the Supply Chain Partners.

- ▲ *"...there are good communication processes in place across the subcontracts."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have been very clear with our SCPs on the situation regarding the re-commissioning process – we need to be clear and honest throughout."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...always at the end of a phone or email – very helpful and open with all staff."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...they (Adviza) are human and flexible – we work on the relationship and talk as human beings."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...I have a very good relationship with them – I don't feel restrained in what I share with them."* – Supply Chain Partner

2b) Developing supply chain partners

Adviza has shown encouragement and support to partner organisations to expand and has for example, explored a bidding opportunity with one partner, which was unfortunately unsuccessful. Another example shared includes Supply Chain Partners attending local Adviza team meetings at which sector and business development information is shared.

- ▲ *"...we are a charity who wants to support other small charities."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...some partners are quite small – and we've worked with them to understand the requirements of the contract and what they need to do to get paid."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we've support a number of charities to become more money and income orientated – without them losing sight of their charitable aims."* – Adviza

There were many examples of how Adviza had encouraged capacity building across the network, including letting a centre build membership on the back of the joint service, an organisation being asked if they could extend their operation into other areas and joint tender with one Supply Chain Partner to access an alternative source of funding.

- ▲ *"...we've experienced rapid growth as working with Adviza has opened up other doors for us because of the contract we deliver for them."* – Supply Chain Partner

Most Supply Chain Partners confirmed that they had received information on and support for staff development from Adviza. Training arranged for staff on the use of the Rickter Scale assessment, understanding substance misuse, Rapid English and Section 139 was highlighted. In addition, one-to-one support given by Adviza staff to staff within partner organisations was acknowledged as being particularly effective.

- ▲ *"...we know that time invested with partner staff pays off as they get the paperwork right which means they get paid correctly."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...new key workers will have one-to-one support, to ensure they are comfortable with all the paper work for example."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...if our internal training is not full we offer the places out to subcontractors."* Adviza
- ▲ *"...in Bucks the staff of partners are integrated into Adviza teams."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...new staff introduced to the project were supported by Adviza at every turn - shadowed them when needed support, helped with paperwork."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...self-assessment tool Richter Scale training paid for by Adviza."* – Supply Chain Partner

2c) Contracting and funding

Adviza has managed processes and procedures to support procurement effectively in line with the requirements and expectations of the commissioners. The revisions made as described in 1a above will further enhance the procurement process. A Supply Chain Partner confirmed that they had received feedback from Adviza on their initial submission to work with them, which enabled them to refine their offer and they now have a contract in place.

As there are a number of commissioners, there is a range of financial models in place. With larger contracts a range of delivery mechanisms are modelled both centrally and with potential Supply Chain Partners before arriving at the final tender submission. For example, with Energise the financial model began at the project design stage and took into consideration the elements of the project that Adviza would deliver and what could potentially be sub-contracted to specialist providers. Supply Chain Partners confirmed that discussions about finances took place and that they are fully aware of the funding model used prior to contracting.

- ▲ *"...small charities for example might not be experienced in working with outcome funding so we took time to make the funding clear and simple for them."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we overachieved and they paid us for it – we did more and this was recognised."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we are paid on profile which was agreed prior to contract."* – Supply Chain Partner

All partner organisations were satisfied with the contractual documentation they had received. Commissioners require certain aspects of their contract with Adviza to be cascaded to the supply chain and this was understood and accepted.

- ▲ *"...the contracts were sorted at Director level and with solicitors, but it's been my job to ensure it's understood within the delivery team."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...contract clear, unambiguous and accurate, based on realistic volumes."* – Supply Chain Partner

Adviza described how market share was discussed as part of the bidding activity and then negotiated with each potential partner organisation based on the contract or project requirements. Post-contract there are examples within the supply chain of negotiations taking place to move market share to support successful delivery partners. However, some Supply Chain Partners who have since joined the supply chain appear unaware of the concept of market share and do not appear to understand their specific impact on the overall contract delivery.

- ▲ *"...initial market share was discussed with partners during the pre-contract stage."* - Adviza

Supply Chain Partners were able to give examples of how they had negotiated volumes and performance profiles with Adviza.

- ▲ *"...negotiated with each partner during the bidding activity."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we've negotiated making changes to contracts to support those who are achieving – all done very positively."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we had long, two-way discussions about the funding with one organisation prior to contract and did two different costing models for them."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...100% clear – they have been great – good relationship from day one."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we had to change the funding model as we wanted to deliver more than there was money for – but we agreed the outcomes in the end."* – Supply Chain Partner

At the point of contracting with Adviza partner organisations agree the payment profile, which varies between contracts as some contracts entail a payment by output or payment by profile element. Supply Chain Partners confirmed that Adviza have been sympathetic to contract variations and have adjusted fee and re-profiling to support their delivery.

- ▲ *"...payment profile agreed with each organisation – they know what they will be paid and when."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...LEAP partners are only paid on outcomes but they have an agreed monthly profile."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...were very flexible with our requirements and rearranged a payment flow that supports our cash flow."* – Supply Chain Partner

The transfer of funds within the partnership network is managed by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership with whom Adviza have a hosted finance service. The invoice and payment process is clearly set out and understood by Supply Chain Partners who judge the process fair and accurate.

- ▲ *"...special payments can be and will be made if requested."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we pay on actual evidence so there are no errors."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...95% plus of suppliers are paid within 30 days."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...now we have established the purchase order system payments are being made on time and without error."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...didn't pay on time initially because we didn't have a purchase order number – now we have its ok."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...no problem – all straight forward."* – Supply Chain Partner

The majority of Supply Chain Partners were able to confirm what they get from Adviza for the management fee, citing help, support, guidance, the management information system etc. In some cases partners described how Adviza had been 100% transparent by sharing with them their operational budget.

- ▲ *"...management fee set by commissioner."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...10% management fee was discussed during pre and post contract – we discussed what was involved in these figures."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...they are open and transparent in many ways but not aware of any management fee – but very clear about own income and finances."* – Supply Chain Partner

3 Conduct

3a) Demonstrating commercial and business integrity

While Adviza's vision and values are widely publicised, there is little evidence that dialogue took place between Adviza and their Supply Chain Partners regarding alignment of common goals, values and ethos. However, partners believe that commonality is implicit due to the nature of the work and that Adviza know whom they want to work with.

- ▲ *"...whole ethos is partnership – the project as a whole is important."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...they are very easy to work with."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we have similar core principles of making young people better citizens and a preventative NEET agenda."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we have a candid and collaborative relationship based on similar values."* – Supply Chain Partner

Adviza complies with TUPE regulations and has had recent experience of staff moving into and out of its organisation, although this was not in relation to sub-contracting relationships.

- ▲ *"...we have managed TUPE as an organisation – both for people joining us and leaving us - and have a robust and effective process in place which has worked in the past."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...due diligence is a key starting point to make sure the people really affected are identified – who is delivering on the contract that is being impacted upon."* - Adviza

All Supply Chain Partners reported on supportive and positive relationships and interactions with Adviza. See 2a above and other examples throughout this report.

- ▲ *"...it's not a 'big brother' relationship – it's an open relationship."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...relationships have been excellent – support is very good."* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners confirmed they receive various updates on various topics relating to legislative policies and procedures relating to contract compliance although some profess to not reading them. However, Adviza has made significant progress in maintaining and updating policies through using the ISO 9001 framework and developing an audit schedule and corrective action request log

- ▲ *"...there have been changes with special needs, so the strategic leads will be working with the partners to develop procedures to meet these changes."* – Adviza

3b) Quality Assurance and Compliance

Adviza operates to ISO standards and has a quality system which includes the measuring and monitoring of Supply Chain Partners against a set of clear criteria including targets and key performance indicators. Monitoring takes place on a quarterly basis to formally review progress against the performance monitoring schedule, which includes observation of professional practice, quality and accuracy of evidence e.g. individual learner records/action plans, client feedback through on-line surveys and questionnaires, safeguarding issues and where appropriate health and safety / risk assessments. This quarterly review process is perceived by some Supply Chain Partners to be not yet embedded due to the length of time they have been operating within the partnership.

- ▲ *"...quality of delivery and the customer experience is done through observations of activities and then feedback."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...quality comes from observations, sampling profiles and paperwork."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...KPIs are in place – compliance, quality etc."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...offered support and guidance sessions on what was needed but bespoke work is what we are good at and why we were brought into the partnership, so while they do monitor the quality of what we do they trust us to deliver."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...observe sessions, evaluate and review paperwork – very positive process and makes us smarten up our processes."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...regular meetings every quarter."* – Supply Chain Partner

Adviza staff gave numerous examples of how their quality assurance activities have informed and improved delivery across the supply chain. While partner organisations were able to give examples of feedback they had received following their own quarterly monitoring visits, they were less able to give examples of how quality issues or concerns raised across the partnership as a whole had been addressed.

- ▲ *"...sessions were called 'circle time' – the young people didn't like the title – so we changed it!"* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...concerns about paperwork raised so undertook observation and was excellent – just wasn't recording it so spent time talking it through and now paperwork meets the contract requirements."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...2 contract managers working with the same organisation but on different contract were operating differently so have paired them up to share information to support the partner."* – Adviza

Audits do take place on the range of information coming to and from Supply Chain Partners to ensure consistency and accuracy. Supply Chain Partners are aware of the importance of ensuring any Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) they provide is accurate, up to date and impartial. Most but not all partners confirmed that they are accredited to the **matrix** Standard.

- ▲ *"...most SCPs have **matrix** accreditation as do Adviza."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...ensuring the IAG we give is at the heart of what we do – however, we have for example, also made sure that the information we have shared with SCPs about the re-commissioning of the careers service contract is very clear and accurate."* – Adviza

Adviza has a data consent and information sharing policy that it implements across all aspects of its work. Contracts exchanged with Supply Chain Partners include data requirements aligned to Adviza's own policy and / or those of the commissioner. Partners confirmed that the security of information relating to young people is paramount to Adviza.

- ▲ *"...there is mandated training on data protection."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...subcontractors have to input information onto a database which is secure."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have identified that we need to improve the on-site audit of data protection."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have provided evidence of our policy and we are aware of what we need to do but I'm not sure if data security is part of our quarterly audit."* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that policies pertaining to the security of data, health and safety at work and the safeguarding of people at risk were all submitted to and scrutinised by Adviza as part of the initial due diligence process.

As part of the continuous improvement cycle, the Adviza Health and Safety Committee has recently reviewed the company's overall health and safety policy, and amendments are underway to ensure clarity around the scope of the policy and to strengthen its coverage of supply chain relationships.

- ▲ *"...all policies were asked for and reviewed as part of the initial contracting process – will be an annual process now."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have to provide up to date health and safety policies, risk assessments etc. before any young people were allowed to use our services."* – Supply Chain Partner

All staff have undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service check and Adviza include this requirement within all their contracts, and mandated safeguarding training is also a requirement.

Adviza has an Environmental and Sustainability Policy in place that has recently been amended to include expectations for all subcontractors. This has been communicated via the supply chain newsletter and further emphasized in annual reviews with partners. As environmental sustainability is not a requirement of the commissioners, it has not been a priority within the Adviza quality assurance and compliance framework. However, work is underway to raise the understanding and profile of environmental sustainability within the supply chain.

- ▲ *"...we don't get asked by our commissioners to support environmental sustainably but we have had a policy in place since 2009."* – Adviza

Adviza highlights excellent practice during local delivery groups, area steering groups and relevant Boards, and there were many examples of excellent / good practice being identified and shared within the supply chain. However, some partners believe this identifying and sharing of excellent practice is happening because of the culture of partnership within the supply chain rather than being prompted by Adviza.

- ▲ *"...bi-monthly meetings – lots of sharing of ideas."* – Adviza

3c) Honouring Commitments

Pre-contract communication with potential partners has taken place in a variety of ways, for example with groups of potential partners, in meetings with individual potential partners and via e-mails and telephone calls. These discussions included negotiation around quality, value for money and delivery. The formality of these discussions depended on the size of the contract and the specific requirements within the funding regime (e.g. ESF, Skills Funding Agency) and these requirements were made clear to partners at pre-contracting stage and reiterated or updated throughout the life of the contract. Supply Chain Partners also shared a number of examples of post-contract negotiations where they had been able to negotiate an increased offer and/or some re-profiling and/or re-allocations.

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that the dispute resolution process and the use of any mediation service was described within their contract with Adviza.

- ▲ *"...dispute resolution policy is in place – everyone should know how disputes can be escalated etc. – it forms part of their contract – but we haven't got to that point in any contract."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...it's in the contract – but would say it and sort it – wouldn't need anything formal."* - Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...there is no disappointment with the relationship so I doubt there will ever be a dispute."* – Supply Chain Partner

Within the individual silos of contracts and projects there is an understanding of what each party is / should be doing – and this has emerged over a period of time. However, this knowledge does not go across the contract silos, other than the supply chain having an understanding of what Adviza are delivering.

- ▲ *"...compliance is linked to each partner's delivery plan – clear expectations in place in each organisation and each contract."* - Adviza

3d) Performance

From the initial procurement process, partners joining the supply chain of particular contracts or projects have been encouraged to work collaboratively to support performance across the contract as a whole. Adviza staff facilitate steering and delivery group meetings held at the premises of partners, with tours included etc. to encourage collaborative working. Again, for some Supply Chain Partners, collaboration is seen as being within the silos of the individual contract and projects and not across the supply chain as a whole.

- ▲ *"...sharing and networking – Adviza helped key workers understand how to improve delivery by encouraging the sharing of delivery models."* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners are very clear about what they need to achieve and, where relevant, have schedules and programme plans in place which detail the outcomes required on a month-by-month basis. Performance reviews between some Supply Chain Partners and Adviza are scheduled to take place at least once every three months.

Partners gave positive feedback on the openness and content of these performance meetings describing how Adviza works closely with them to measure, monitor and manage the work they deliver, so that they can achieve high quality outcomes. However, not all partners were able to confirm that these meetings have taken place and are unsure about the frequency of any formal monitoring process.

- ▲ *"...we are getting more feedback on performance from the young people through using SurveyMonkey, which means we are getting more up to date feedback on what our customers think of the performance of our partners so we can share this with them."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...improvement plans will be agreed if partners are underperforming or there are non-conformances."* Adviza
- ▲ *"...they reallocated targets to take the pressure off."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...very open dialogue about performance – we talk about everything."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...they are not hard on performance but more of an understanding approach to look at any underlying reasons for poor performance."* – Supply Chain Partner

The management information system used in each project varies according to the funding and contractual requirements. Those partners who have access to the on-line management information system confirmed that the system they use is robust and easy to use and provides good data.

- ▲ *"...Apricot – useful information provided – good system providing good management information."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...PICS – can get lots of information from it but only used by Adviza."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we get the MI we need to manage the contract and to know what we are getting paid."* – Supply Chain Partner

The Adviza Senior Leadership Team use a risk register as a tool for identifying financial risks across their organisation and their supply chain, regarding over or underspending. They also achieve value for money through joint procurement of stationery and insurance within the reachfor consortium.

- ▲ *"...value for money is built into the commissioning policy."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...value for money doesn't mean the cheapest – it's about what the organisation brings into the partnership – what expertise they can share."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we give value for money through the impact on young people – but no real data to support this – we just know."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...best value – value for money is integral to how we operate – we always consider it in all we do."* – Supply Chain Partner

All Supply Chain Partners described the importance they placed on measuring the progress of clients. Methods used vary depending on the requirements of the commissioner and include data collection, case studies, client feedback, progress towards or sustainment of education, employment or training.

- ▲ *"...young people in school contract starts with destination survey – where does the young person want to be at key transition states – then work with them."* – Adviza

- ▲ "...do needs analysis on which young people need to be seen and what level of support they need to get to their desired outcome – then we monitor the journey along the way by reviewing their plans." – Adviza
- ▲ "...we have a good handle of exactly where our clients are at with their journeys with qualitative aspects also taken into account." – Supply Chain Partners
- ▲ "...we use the Richter Scale for measuring the softer outcomes." – Supply Chain Partner

3e) Promoting Equality and Diversity

Adviza are a *Positive about Disability* recruiter and hold *Investors in Diversity* accreditation, consequently this commitment to equality and diversity is specifically highlighted in all bids, and documentation for potential partners captures specific information with regard to equality and diversity. Supply Chain Partners confirmed that the initial due diligence process they engaged in with Adviza included sharing their policy and a two-way commitment to being positive about equality and diversity.

Client data input into the management information system includes contractual equality and diversity categories - gender, race and disability. Within one project there are specific targets for representation of minority ethnic young people and representation of male and female participants. These figures are monitored and shared with partners who respond accordingly to ensure actual participation within the project reflects the requirements of the commissioner.

- ▲ "...PICS MI system enables us to monitor and promote the diversity, ages, of the young people so we ensure partners are meeting any specific group's needs effectively." – Adviza
- ▲ "...we have a specific target for special needs, young parents, BME." – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners reported some good equality data feedback being shared by Adviza. This included monthly monitoring of relevant KPIs and discussions about how under-represented groups could be engaged with.

- ▲ "...we work with one partner who has expertise in gang culture – they have made a difference to us engaging with this vulnerable group who are in danger of becoming NEET." – Adviza
- ▲ "...we looked at the number of BME interventions against the number of young people in the group and realized the need to do more to support them – so now have targeted the BME groups and are giving them priority for a while." – Adviza
- ▲ "...monthly reporting against all KPIs including vulnerable groups." – Supply Chain Partner

4 Review

4a) Supply chain review

Stakeholder groups are clearly defined and play an active role in receiving and giving feedback on the impact of the contracts and projects being delivered through the supply chain. The Adviza consultation cycle includes sub-contractor participant feedback through the use of observation of activities, questionnaires via SurveyMonkey etc., and feedback from stakeholders such as teachers and parents.

Local Delivery Groups and Steering Groups are also in place. A number of improvements to the design and delivery of the supply chain activities across the contracts and projects were shared during the assessment.

- ▲ *"...review meetings every quarter to review progress and to get feedback from partner and stakeholder organisations on what we are delivering – what changes we need to make to the delivery plan – how as a group we can achieve our contracts."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...what we teach hasn't changed – how we teach it changes all the time based on feedback from the young people."* – Supply Chain Partner

An annual self-assessment report is carried out and is based on feedback from all key stakeholders. The results of quality audits are reported both to the relevant partner and to the Senior Leadership Team and improvement plans developed where appropriate. The improvement plans are recorded on a corrective action request log so that the Quality Manager can ensure agreed actions take place and can report on impact.

- ▲ *"...we used to have just three commissioners but now we are the data controllers for others so we need to ensure we engage stakeholders in our key processes."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have been involved in a meeting about it and are reviewing the project and how to improve it next year."* – Supply Chain Partner

Some Supply Chain Partners interviewed were aware of the wider policy and strategies of commissioners. For example, they were aware of the Skills Funding Agency role in supporting the development of Traineeships, operating the National Careers Service and the National Apprenticeship Service, using the European Social Fund to enable disadvantaged people to access and benefit from employment and skills opportunities etc.

Other partners working in schools are aware of, for example, the Families Project and how they can influence the parents of the young people they are engaging with. This knowledge of the Skills Funding Agency and other commissioners was perceived to have come through a number of sources including emails and updates from Adviza, information directly from the commissioners and their own interest in the wider policy and strategy of organisations with whom they might receive funding.

Supply Chain Partners were able to share numerous examples of how the work they are delivering supported by Adviza is having a measurable impact on the wider social objectives or the commissioners'. These examples related to success stories of individuals within the project silos and there was little understanding of wider impact of the supply chain as a whole.

- ▲ *"...we are engaging people in accredited learning which helps them with progression."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...lots of examples – young people gaining self-confidence, feeling stronger about how to deal with their issues."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...young people have modified their behaviours at school and improve their chances of getting their qualifications."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we are encouraging apprenticeships much more now."* – Supply Chain Partner
- ▲ *"...we know we are raising participation rates of vulnerable groups."* – Supply Chain Partner

The outcomes of the various processes and mechanisms to review and develop the supply chain have given rise to some changes, including the loss of organisations from the partnership and the introduction of new organisations with different delivery methodologies.

- ▲ *"...review delivery plans annually to ensure the SCPs as a group continue to meet customer needs and how best they can deliver the year's targets."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...some partners have become accredited centres which means their sustainability as a business and a positive impact on the young people as they are able to use locally centres."* – Adviza
- ▲ *"...we have a wheel identifying where our money comes from and we are pulling this all together so we have a strategic approach to reviewing and improving our supply chain."* – Adviza

Through the Energise programme feedback from stakeholders such as teachers has confirmed that the behaviour and timekeeping of those young people attending the programme has improved – thus improving their chances of gaining qualifications. Other links are being made to sexual health awareness and anti-bullying etc. As health and wellbeing has been rising higher up the national agenda Adviza has obtained additional funding to consider innovative ways of linking wellbeing to employability, and the Workfit and Energise programmes are examples of this.

- ▲ *"...we have developed a strong relationship with one SCP who has a real understanding of gang culture – they are making a difference in their area which we couldn't do alone."* – Adviza

Conclusion

It was evident to the assessor team that Adviza has, over the last 12 months, developed a more professional and structured approach to supply chain management.

Some of the processes are still in development and need time to embed, but the assessment confirmed that the fundamentals of excellent supply chain relationships such as a culture of openness and trust and excellent working relationships are already very well established.