



**merlin**

promoting supply chain excellence

**Assessment Report**

**For**

**Twin Training**

**By Rob Mottram**

**On behalf of emqc Ltd**

**Assessment Date: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

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## About the Organisation

Twin Training International is a privately owned provider of education, travel, work experience and employment services, both in the UK and internationally, offering progression to jobseekers and international students focused on career success. Providing English language courses and travel services for students from all over the world, Twin Training has excelled as a British Council-accredited English language provider and specialises in work experience and internships.

Twin Training is a welfare-to-work provider for British residents, delivering government-funded training programmes and free recruitment services, leading to employment opportunities in the UK. Twin Training has a national network of 70 partners providing education and employment services across the UK, as well as six year-round centres and more than 45 outreach centres delivering welfare-to-work provision.

Twin Training, established in 1997 have been delivering the ESF Families contract in the South West, covering Gloucester, Swindon, Bristol, Bournemouth and Plymouth (CPA 9) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions since it went live in December 2011. Twin Training currently subcontracts over 90% of all front-line delivery to a network of 9 providers from the public, private and third sectors.

## Assessment Methodology

A number of teleconferences took place between the Lead Assessor and the assessment coordinator for Twin Training in the months preceding the assessment where support and guidance was given, including information as to how the assessment would take place. Following this, selection and agreement of the Supply Chain Partners who would be interviewed was made. Twin Training created schedules for each of the assessors.

During the assessment a 100% of end-to-end supply chain partners were spoken to. These interviews took place by telephone. During the assessment, assessors reviewed a range of documentary evidence and IT systems provided by Twin Training, interviewed a wide range of staff, including senior managers and customer facing staff from the supply chain and a range of staff from Twin Training. All principles of the Merlin standard were fully assessed by a team of 3 assessors; Rob Mottram (Lead Assessor), Stuart Morgan and John Taylor who spent a total of 12 days undertaking this assessment.

## Assessment Outcome

Overall %	63%
Overall Outcome	Satisfactory
Supply Chain Design	Good
Commitment	Satisfactory
Conduct	Satisfactory
Review	Satisfactory

## Strengths

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

- ▲ Re-design of supply chain arrangements, which now utilise a healthy mix of public, private and not for profit organisations. Supply chain arrangements have improved since the last assessment and ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of provision for customers. (1a.1, 1a.2 & 1a.3)
- ▲ Interactions between Twin Training staff and Supply chain partner staff are very positive and supportive. Good multi-level relationships exist and a friendly and flexible approach is complimented by frequent contacts and communications, particularly between the Claims and Validation team and Supply Chain Partners. (2a.5 & 3a.3)
- ▲ Positive feedback from Supply Chain Partners about the business and commercial integrity of Twin Training, particularly in relation to the honouring of commitments. (3a & 3c.1)
- ▲ Ongoing commitment to the promotion of diversity and equality amongst Supply Chain Partners (3e)

## 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. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

- ▲ Increase the identification and implementation of activities used by Twin Training for improving the performance of the supply chain and ensure that actions set, particularly those that contribute to continuous improvement are tracked to resolution. (3d.1, 3d.2 & 3d.6)

- ▲ More proactive identification of operational 'know how' across the supply chain and use of this to enhance performance. (3b.8)
- ▲ Place greater focus on the development of staff and capacity building within the supply chain network. (2b.1 & 2b.3)
- ▲ More use of feedback for purposes of continuous improvement. (4a.1 & 4a.2)

## Areas Requiring Further Development

Because Twin Training 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.

## Assessment Findings

### 1 Supply Chain Design

#### 1a) Supply chain design

Twin Training have further developed their supply chain since their previous Merlin assessment in 2012. A rich mix of organisations are now established partners and meet the needs of all stakeholder's, particularly customers. At the previous Merlin assessment it was identified that the supply chain arrangements were fragile and that improvements were required. Improvements and alterations were made to the supply chain arrangements and the current arrangements include public, private and third sector representation. A number of partners have been supported to build capacity, and increase both market share and geographic coverage.

*"I suspect that they learned a great deal from the first incarnation of suppliers and recognised that there is a need to match supplier talents with community needs."* – Supply Chain Partner

Direct contract delivery by Twin Training has also been diluted over the course of the programme delivery and now makes up less than 10% of total contract delivery a reduction from Twin Training's delivery of 55% at the last assessment. Through demonstrating their abilities to successfully deliver the programme, the most appropriate 'end to end' delivery Supply Chain Partners have evolved from the original supply chain design and now form an important part of the current supply chain. Supply chain organisations that were successful in becoming partners have received from Twin Training increases in market share; these decisions were based on a number of criteria, including meeting Twin Training's geographical requirements, performance, alignment of values and with their ability to meet the needs of commissioners and customers.

Twin Training's Supply Chain Partnership arrangements for the delivery of ESF families are solely held with 'end to end' providers, who are established organisations with robust track records in the delivery of similar programmes. These organisations are specialists in providing focused support to customers in helping address complex barriers to work, such as homelessness, dealing with debt, improving health and well-being and the development of skills which assist customers in securing sustainable employment. The changes made to the supply chain arrangements, as outlined above has resulted in Twin Training delivering a smaller market share, more inline with their original desire to deliver less than 20% of the contract using their own delivery arm.

*"...Twin's ESF contract fitted well with our mainstream work with families under stress"* – Supply Chain Partner

## 2 Commitment

### 2a) Collaboration, cooperation and communication

Supply Chain Partners validated that during all stages of the procurement processes, communications were consistent and transparent. As at Twin Training's last assessment, discussions and communications were usually conducted by telephone, email or face to face and were described by Supply Chain Partners as responsive and effective. These discussions enabled parties to make informed decisions over the viability of joining the supply chain and appropriateness of their services and skills in delivering the contract. Any discussions held were usually followed up with written documentation, which provided conformation to partners.

*"...Twin are very good, and better than most at getting back to you quickly to answer any queries – the Claims team at Lewisham have been excellent throughout"* – Supply Chain Partner

As at their last assessment, Supply Chain Partners validated that prior to contract 'go live' they were encouraged to discuss and contribute to the development of appropriate paperwork and processes. Since 'go-live' opportunities to further develop processes has been limited, but has included some effective actions which has increased referrals and it should be noted that Twin Training encourage partners to use their own organisations existing processes and share these processes between partners which is appreciated by Supply Chain Partners who feel this approach reduces administrative burden on them.

*"...the last Partnership Meeting in October had focused more on contract performance than had been the case previously"* – Supply Chain Partner

*"...If we've got systems and processes in place, Twin allow us to use those rather than impose another system on us to work to, that's really helpful for us, this contract is an add on, we couldn't expect our staff to adopt a new way of working for the small numbers of customers that we support"* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners indicated that there has been relatively few opportunities for the supply chain to work collaboratively within their geographies and with open participation to deliver comprehensive services to customers, however it should be noted that Supply Chain Partners have been supported to explore different options of support for customers by Twin Training who have provided responsive assistance when requested. Twin Training has fostered open communications between the parties involved, which has been facilitated in the main part through the good use of a dedicated contract manager. The role of the contract manager has been to provide on-going, proactive practical operational support, which is recognised and acknowledged by the Supply Chain Partners as being useful and effective. As identified at the previous assessment this role has been highly effective in ensuring that there is no ambiguity in the business relationships and has helped foster working practices. Informal and friendly in nature, this role ensures communication is clear. The main opportunity for sharing between Supply Chain Partners has been through the use of emails between Twin Trainings central teams and the Supply Chain Partners and the Partnership Meetings, which follow agendas described by partners as mainly covering administrative and operational requirements. Partnership Forums have not occurred as frequently or haven't been as regular as were originally promised by Twin Training due to the relatively small contract value and referral volumes. The decision to reduce the number of partner forums was taken to reduce the burden on Supply Chain Partners and instead Twin Training chose to use teleconferences and bulletins to share information. There is however evidence of strategies being developed during meetings that have been used to promote the services offered to customers and increase performance.

Clear communication channels are an established feature of Twin Training's approach to Supply Chain Management. Frequent use of email to communicate with Supply Chain Partners and regular telephone communication between Twin Training and the Supply Chain Partners throughout the life of the contract has been effective. Contract and Quality Managers provide Supply Chain Partners with regular (weekly/fortnightly/three-weekly) bulletins with updates from Department for Work and Pensions and job vacancies in a variety of vocational areas. For most partners monthly 1:1 meetings are held and provide a sound basis for ensuring there is no ambiguity regarding the business relationship.

*"...Twin Training is working towards becoming a listening organisation. They respond quite promptly if it is a quality issue."* – Supply Chain Partner

Partners were able to validate that Twin Training has created an open culture. All partners were able to confirm this as a particular strength of Twin Training, and all Supply Chain Partners expressed a good level of trust for Twin Training and the staff who support the delivery of the contract. There were numerous examples of how Twin Training's approach had fostered this culture including the lobbying the appropriate parties to address referral problems experienced during the early stages of the contract delivery.

*"...Twin central staff are very accessible and responsive to calls and emails – they don't go in for leaving us endless voicemail which unfortunately is too common with some Prime contractors"* – Supply Chain Partner

## 2b) Developing supply chain partners

Twin Training's development of Supply Chain Partners requires further improvement. As at the previous assessment, Twin Training have had limited opportunity to develop Supply Chain Partners with much more focus on supporting organisations to remain effective members of the supply chain.

Supply Chain Partners have been given appropriate levels of support by Twin Training to ensure that they have the correct infrastructure in place to support the delivery of the contract and work effectively with Twin Training, mainly limiting this development to ensuring the necessary claims documentation and validation takes place.

*"...more Partnership Forum meetings - especially in the early years of the contract - would have been a great help. The exemplar 'good file' that Twin put together and shared with us was really useful"* – Supply Chain Partner

Twin Training has ensured that opportunities for Supply Chain Partners to access funding and support services have been maximised, for example by identifying organisations where the ESF programme would fit well as 'providing additionally' for other programmes aimed to support people in moving back to employment. These organization were then invited to join the supply chain and Twin Training were proactive in alerting and encouraging these partners if they were interested in being part of the prospective supply chain for the National Citizenship programme; When Twin Training were notified they hadn't been successful with their tender they offered to pass the organisations EOIs (with their permission) to the successful tender winner.

*"...we have been able to use Twin's ESF contract as a wraparound support programme to enable us to work with some of our customers with the most barriers to employment"* – Supply Chain Partner

As at the last assessment, some staff development within the supply chain has taken place, however this development has been mainly limited to process training. During the early stages of the contract delivery supply chain staff received useful Benefit Cap related information and more recently some partners have received training in manipulation of spreadsheets. Twin Training provides this training to supply chain partner staff at no additional financial cost. Supply Chain Partner staff were able to confirm some good 1:1 support given to increase understanding and improve the quality of financial claims made.

*"...we've been observed and the feedback was really useful to our staff, its good to know whether your practice is seen as good enough"* – Supply Chain Partner

## 2c) Contracting and funding

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that Twin Training used procurement processes that were fair and transparent. At the last assessment this area was identified as requiring improvements. Formal written procurement processes and defined scoring criteria have been further developed since the assessment in 2012 and these were used well when introducing new partners to the supply chain more recently. Twin Training now routinely



gather information from interested parties and use this to good effect when looking to tender for new opportunities such as the National Citizenship programme. Information gathered through the expression of interest form includes understanding geographical coverage, experience of working with a wide range of customers, and track record in delivery of previous employment and training programs.

Twin Training demonstrated and Supply Chain Partners validated verbal and written confirmation was provided to all partners regardless of outcome, with detailed feedback available on request.

As at the last assessment Twin Training has reflected the funding arrangements that were agreed with Department for Work and Pensions and follow the payment by results model. Twin Training and Supply Chain Partners confirmed that delivery of the contract has been financially very challenging, particularly during the first year because, predominately of the low referrals, low attachment fee and need to claim a bundle of performance measures before payment; more recently changes have been made and all parties have become familiar with of how to maximise the contract. Partners however felt that financial arrangements were 'fair and reasonable' on the part of Twin Training, citing challenges with the successful delivery of the ESF Families contract, and ensuring its long term financial viability.

Supply Chain Partners were able to validate that Twin Training provide appropriate contractual documentation to sufficiently define obligations of both Twin Training and its Supply Chain Partners and documentation reflects that held between the commissioner and Twin Training. Contracts define minimum performance and service levels for partners, however historical challenges relating to referral levels meant contractual targets for some partners have been unrealistic which has resulting in some Supply Chain Partners expressing concerns at not receiving revised targets.

Whilst market share is clear and Supply Chain Partners were able to validate their understanding of this during the assessment, some partners were unaware of all of the current partners who form the supply chain. Volume of market share has been discussed with partners and introduced to support the progression of customers into employment. In some instances market share has been increased to ensure viability of delivery, this approach is effective in supporting performance improvements and ensures Commissioners needs are being met.

There is a successful strategy to manage the transfer of funds within the supply chain, which was validated by Supply Chain Partners. Partners benefit from using a self-billing process that ensures following appropriate completion onto the PICS system, validation checks take place and claims are paid promptly to Supply Chain Partners. Payment terms are 30 days; payments are prompt and timely with partners describing processes as good overall with a couple of supply chain partners describing 'rare administrative anomalies'. Supply Chain Partners do not feel that payments have been held unnecessarily or delayed.

*"The claims team at Twin are excellent; they are always accessible by phone and sort out any problems quickly plus they let you know exactly what they have done."* – Supply Chain Partner

Supply Chain Partners were very clear about the management fee paid to Twin Training, and indicated that the level of management fee is low at 15%. Supply Chain Partners feel the level of support received is adequate, however it may be worth Twin Training carrying out a full assessment to ensure that the management fees paid by Supply Chain Partners are sufficient to enable Twin Training to provide high quality supply chain management services.

*"...they charge us a low management fee, the support we get is in line with the fee to be honest, if they charged us more we would be expecting more support, they run this contract on a very small budget and number of staff, they are very lean"* – Supply Chain Partner

## 3 Conduct

### 3a) Demonstrating commercial and business integrity

As in their previous assessment, Twin Training have developed supply chain arrangements to utilise partners who share its company values and ethos. These values are clear in the ongoing commitment to the delivery of the ESF Families contract. Twin Training holds a set of core principles at the heart of the business they do. Supply Chain Partners who were selected to work with Twin Training share values that closely align to those of Twin Training. Twin Training's values are care, resilience, rigour, achievement, diversity and commerciality, which partners believe Twin work to, and, form the basis of the relationship between them. Twin Training also described an aspiration to be 'first amongst equals' as a supplier to the Department of Work and Pensions. Supply Chain Partners interviewed validated that their own organisations values were reviewed at due diligence stage and the alignment of organisations values formed an important part of the decision making process regarding partnering with Twin Training.

*"Twin have come across to us as 'a socially-conscious' organisation which is not always looking for cash and so are similar to ourselves"* – Supply Chain Partner

*"I don't know what Twin's values actually are; but I would say that as an organisation we seem to have a similar aim – that of providing the best service we can to help people back into work"* – Supply Chain Partner

As identified during the assessment in 2012, TUPE processes are as yet untested as there has not been any requirement for this. Twin engages the services of specialist independent HR advisors who provide support on all HR matters. Twin Training has clearly documented and effective strategies to manage the TUPE process.

Interactions between Twin Training and its Supply Chain Partners are very positive and supportive. Supply Chain Partners confirmed that the tone of relationships between Twin Training and Supply Chain Partners was very positive; there was considerable praise from all the Supply Chain Partners for the helpfulness and responsiveness of Twin Training staff. Twin Training's operational team provide high levels of practical support which helps

partners overcome operational practicalities, for example providing advice on how to manage lone working safely.

*"...Twin are good to work with; they do have able people in their Head Office at Lewisham, they go the extra mile to support you"* – Supply Chain Partner

Twin Training has in place arrangements to ensure that Supply Chain Partners receive timely updates to support and allows them to maintain legislative and regulatory requirements. Newsletters and bulletins are used to ensure legislative and contractual updates are communicated and where necessary discussed during teleconferences to ensure understanding.

### 3b) Quality assurance and compliance

As identified at the assessment in 2012 a series of due diligence activities took place prior to the contract 'go-live' date. During the live running of the contract, regular on-site audits of Supply Chain Partner processes and remote file audits of customer interactions take place. Results from these audits inform discussions held during performance reviews and contribute to the overall management and support given to Supply Chain Partners. Supply Chain Partner staff with responsibility for quality assurance have been encouraged to buddy each other and develop greater understanding of this important area. Formal observations of customer interactions have taken place with many of the Supply Chain Partners.

*"...we have found the Twin QA process to be fairly low key and certainly not as rigid in its demands as some we have worked with"* – Supply Chain Partner

As at their last assessment, many of the Supply Chain Partners were accredited to the **matrix** standard; Twin Training are looking to secure accreditation to the **matrix** standard in the near future. Supply Chain Partners were satisfied with the level of information, advice and guidance received by them from Twin Training through the contract management process.

*"...Twin have been good with distilling down the information we need from DWP"* – Supply Chain Manager

Twin Training have implemented policies and processes during due diligence to ensure they maintain security of all data and assets within the supply chain, and the continued adherence to these standards is checked both on an annual basis and through an 'eyes and ears' approach conducted during site visits. Where organisations have not got appropriate policies in place, Twin Training provide template policies for Supply Chain Partners to adopt.

Healthy and safe work environments and commitments to improving environmental sustainability were assured by Twin Training through processes utilised at the due diligence stage, and the continued adherence to these standards is checked both on an annual basis and through an 'eyes and ears' approach conducted during site visits. Where organisations have not got appropriate policies in place, Twin Training provide template policies for Supply Chain Partners to adopt. As at their assessment in 2012, lone working policies and practices were given particular attention by Twin Training, which is particularly positive given the outreach delivery nature of parts of the ESF Families contract.

People at risk and vulnerable groups are appropriately safeguarded by Twin Training through an appropriate set of policies and practices which were checked as part of the due diligence stage and the continued adherence to these standards is checked both on an annual basis and through an 'eyes and ears' approach conducted during site visits. Where organisations have not got appropriate policies in place, Twin Training provide template policies for Supply Chain Partners to adopt. In most instances the by nature of Supply Chain Partners core activities meant partners are highly experienced in working with vulnerable adults and have robust pre-established protocols in place. Supply Chain Partners were asked to make declarations that their staff delivering the ESF Families contract meet the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS).

Good practice is currently insufficiently identified, monitored and shared. The focus of Twin Training has been to support the operational delivery of the challenging ESF Families contract. More recently 'Good Practice' has become an agenda item during partnership meetings, however there is too few opportunities to develop and share best practice by Twin Training.

### 3c) Honouring commitments

Supply Chain Partners were able to confirm that contract negotiations were clear and open; negotiations were conducted in a friendly and practical manner and Supply Chain Partners felt that Twin Training supported this with contractual documentation, which was clear, and required very little explanation or changes to be made. Any variations that have been required came as a result of changes to the contract by the commissioner, such as the introduction of new performance measures, evidence requirements and when payments could be claimed all have which had been clearly communicated to the Supply Chain Partners.

Supply Chain Partners are aware of Twins Training formal dispute resolution process. At the time of assessment there had been no formal complaints from the supply chain. Supply Chain Partners expressed a belief that they would feel comfortable in approaching Twin Training's centralised team with concerns and that it would expect any such disputes to be resolved before requiring any formal processes.

Twin Training's senior managers have stated they would fully respect decisions made as a result of the Merlin Mediation Service if it had been deemed to have not acted in accordance with the principles of the Merlin Standard.

At every level within supply chains, all parties are aware of each other expectations. Historically, some examples, including the appropriateness of targets during the life of the contract would have benefitted from more rapid review, however Supply Chain Partners expectations, queries, concerns, and suggestions are transparently raised and discussed at the monthly review meetings with the contract manager and the quarterly audit meetings.

*"...although we have only been a minor player, during our work on the ESF Families Programme we have never had to move beyond the discussion and agreement mode of working together with Twin" – Supply Chain Partner*

### 3d) Performance

Improvements have been made to the mix of Supply Chain Partners which support the delivery of ESF Families Programme and the current arrangements mean more appropriate Supply Chain Partners are working with customers in a set geographical area. Too few opportunities are currently taken to work collaboratively and recognise innovation and improve performance. Historically, comparative data was not shared with supply chain partners, however there is now a good level of sharing of data and regular open telephone discussions with partners, who in more recent times have made significant contributions to the overall success of the partnership.

Clear channels support regular performance review, and the methods, both face to face and by teleconference are well established and effective. Monthly meetings are held between Twin Training and the Supply Chain Partner and include discussions about contractual performance, operational delivery concerns, and opportunities. These meetings follow a standard format and utilise the contract performance data generated by PICS. Both parties, following discussion, agree any performance targets. Supply Chain Partners confirmed monthly performance reviews are consistent in regularity.

*"...these processes have been clear and unambiguous throughout and conducted in a professional and friendly manner" – Supply Chain Partner*

Performance expectations have not always been clearly defined by Twin Training, due in the main to the historical issues regarding referral levels at the beginning of the contract. Open discussions were held prior to contract 'go live' based on indicative referral figures, however issues with referral levels meant the targets set were inappropriate and the subsequent review of these performance expectations had not been completed rapidly enough. Twin Training have worked effectively to ensure that these issues were rectified however and are committed to ensuring this isn't repeated in any future activities.

*"...we began work on the contract under the understanding that we would do what we can; but we got the hang of what was needed and then set our own targets from there and we now find that we are now one of the best performers in the chain" – Supply Chain Partner*

Twin Training provides Supply Chain Partners with a user-friendly caseload management system; PICS, which records the customer journey. Supply Chain Partner administrative staff have formed good relationships with the Twin Training claims team, which provides good and very responsive telephone support. Twin Training have made considerable efforts to make it easy for Supply Chain Partners to download data and provided some training to use excel so that they can manipulate data and increase their understanding of contract performance. Twin Training produce additional reports, specifically around the analysis of the equality and diversity cohort performance of clients. A small number of Supply Chain

Partners expressed minor 'irritations' linked to system issues that occasionally 'locks' staff out when trying to access PICS.

There has not been any deliberate attempt to define Value For Money by Twin Training at the time of assessment, however in terms of efficiency, lower levels of anticipated revenue generated from the contract has meant that both Twin Training and the Supply Chain Partners have operated within a very lean staffing structure. Supply Chain Partners have developed more efficient interaction processes, for example by using more group delivery sessions.

### 3e) Promoting diversity & equality

As at their assessment in 2012, this area continues to be an area of particular strength for Twin Training. Twin Training continue to ensure through considerate selection the arrangements for the Supply Chain Partners are aligned very closely to their own commitment to Diversity and Equality. Due diligence activities confirmed Supply Chain Partners commitment to Diversity and Equality and where partners didn't have sufficient policies in place, Twin Training supported these organisations with the sharing of templates and example documents. Ongoing commitment to this area is monitored on an on-going basis through review meetings that are held between the contract manager and the supply chain partner. Observations conducted by Twin Training also require comment to be made relating to diversity and equality. Self-Assessment activities required by Twin Training to be completed by partners require submission to include diversity and equality activities and the impact these are having on the customers they support.

Diversity and equality is monitored and promoted well by Twin Training. Data is collected from Twin Training and their Supply Chain Partners through the PICS system and reports produced as at their last assessment which identifies marginalised customer groups; those customers who are been worked with more effectively and the types of barriers customers are faced with. This analysis of equal opportunity data is enabling Twin Training to provide more focus to its delivery, attract harder to reach customers and ultimately improve performance. This type of information is circulated to Supply Chain Partners along with a number of 'trigger questions' which are discussed at Partnership Forums, which has both increased understanding and created a consist approach across the Supply Chain Partners.

*"...We have all our own D & E monitoring processes in place and Twin have been happy to accept these"* – Supply Chain Partner

## 4 Review

### 4a) Supply chain review

Systematic approaches to how Twin Training seeks and uses feedback is underdeveloped and doesn't sufficiently inform Twin Training's review activities. Feedback is gathered from Supply Chain Partners through contract management reviews, during supply chain forums and formal questionnaires, however it is unclear to Supply Chain Partners as to how this

informs the development of different operational approaches and delivery activities, despite Twin Training providing evidence to demonstrate changes made to a number of processes and operational activities. Other key stakeholders, including the commissioner and customers are communicated with on a regular basis. Supply Chain Partners were aware of their contribution of information to the Department for Work & Pensions Provider Assurance Team (PAT) audit of Twin Training and were able to confirm that feedback following this audit was received and partners were supported to make any adjustments that they needed to make arising from this audit. Twin Training also conducts quarterly contract performance reviews in addition to a range of separate quality assurance process audits and provides written feedback to Supply Chain Partners. Supply Chain Partners are also asked by Twin Training to gather feedback from their customers twice a year, however partners were unclear as to how this information was used.

Twin Training have an underdeveloped approach to the generation of an annual continuous improvement plan, Supply Chain Partners were unclear of the process and their contribution to it. Whilst Supply Chain Partners produce their own Self Assessment plans these are not systematically used to contribute to the development of Twin Training's own assessment, however information is requested from Supply Chain Partners on an ad-hoc basis. Twin Training keeps its Supply Chain Partners well informed of the wider policy and strategy information relating to the Commissioner. This information is communicated through regular Supply Chain Partner bulletins with main points reinforced by emails and re-visited in Partnership Forum meetings and by Contract Manager.

Twin Training have used review strategies effectively to ensure that the supply chain has evolved to meet the changing needs of the customer, this is demonstrated in the significant changes made to the make up of the supply chain and the introduction of new partners to the supply chain. Twin Training and its Supply Chain Partners confirmed their belief that the improved performance of the ESF Families programme has been through the use of innovative activity and the development of services to deliver this type of challenging contract.

Twin Training have developed and support its Supply Chain Partners to allow flexibility in how and who is best placed to support its customers, evidence gathered by from the assessment team suggests that families who had accessed the ESF Families Action Programme was very convincing in terms of having a positive impact on the families that the commissioner has targeted. Twin Training were able to provide a good range of case studies to demonstrate how the activities have impacted positively on its customers and Supply Chain Partners are asked to provide good news stories and case studies on a regular basis.

## Conclusion

Twin Training has demonstrated behaviors that fully meet the requirements of the Merlin Standard. It was evident to the assessment team that since their last assessment Twin Training has implemented a number of the Areas of Improvement identified at the last Merlin assessment in 2012. Despite operational and contractual challenges Twin Training continue to support and challenge their supply chain to deliver effective interventions to its customers. Since 2012 Twin Training have improved their approach to supply chain

management, particularly in the area of Supply Chain Design, which has improved significantly. Supply Chain Partners confirmed that Twin Trainings staff behaviors are professional and positive, essential behaviors expected of a Prime contractor organisation.