



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This month we are looking at the journey of..

<https://www.debutacademy.com/academy/>

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## WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Established in 2004 as a private training provider, I gained valuable experience and in 2011 secured a subcontract with a large training provider. Due to the instability of subcontracting funding, we found ourselves working with four prime contractors, learning both what to do and what to avoid. We adopted the best practices from those experiences. By 2016, we secured our own funding and were inspected under the old framework in 2019, receiving a "Good" grade. Currently, we deliver 37 different programmes across three curriculums, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive educational offering

A big thank  
you!

Carla and Charlotte hosted our September 'Aiming for Outstanding' event, talking to our members in more detail about the journey they have been on to gain this inspection outcome.

*'FIN is my favourite website to go on, we use the resources in our planning meetings and presentations to identify the areas we really need to focus on. One of the things we honed in on was CPD. I'm quite proud to say that our CPD sessions for our staff are amazing'* **Charlotte**

## WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE WE FACED?

Our biggest challenge was evidencing everything we were doing. We always knew we were meeting expectations, but we weren't always sure how to evidence it correctly. Now, we use the platform 'Padlet' to collect evidence aligned with the EIF judgments, breaking down the criteria into specific segments. We also utilised Fins resource AFI, which flagged key areas quarterly and highlighted new themes as they emerged in the next cycle. We named these segments within our programme "Training for Purpose," diving deeper into our core values. This allowed us to create an overarching structure that naturally aligned with all areas of the judgments. As a result, delegating key roles and responsibilities became easier, enabling staff to take ownership of their areas.

### CARLA HALES

Managing Director

Since 2011, Carla has been responsible for successfully leading the company's performance, ambitions and development. Carla leads by example, she listens, questions and stretches her team while implementing changes swiftly to meet educational demands which she believes is the key to the success of her company.

### CHARLOTTE MCHIGGINS

Head of T&L

Charlotte is a dedicated professional who started her career with Debut Training Academy 2015. Over the years, she has become a vital player in the standardisation efforts of the Debut team, consistently ensuring the highest standards and quality.

In her role, Charlotte plays a crucial role in curriculum development, defining expectations, mentoring tutors, and delivering training programs to guarantee outstanding education for all learners.





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## WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER PROVIDERS WITH THE SAME ASPIRATIONS?

Planning is key. Start by identifying your challenges and benchmarking yourself against other providers. Prioritise areas that need improvement and gather evidence of your successes and key achievements. Data should be a top priority—not just the mandatory metrics, but also a showcase of your wins. Without data, progress can't be accurately measured or improved.

Create your Ofsted circle and assign each member a specific role. We held weekly meetings where key staff members presented on their areas of responsibility. During these sessions, the rest of the team would measure the presentation against key judgements, challenge the presenter to make improvements, and we saw their confidence grow. This process also helped identify gaps in evidence, as we would ask critical "how" and "why" questions. To show what quality improvements are evident to change.

Roles and key themes were assigned, with individuals held accountable for their areas. Stand out by showcasing what you're doing differently and how this leads to better outcomes.

## WHICH FIN RESOURCES HAVE YOU FOUND THE MOST USEFUL?

The most useful resources for us, were: 6.700 6.701 6.702 6.703  
Ten Questions on each area  
(Judgement areas)

## WHAT FIN SUPPORT HAVE YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY HELPFUL?

Whenever we encountered challenges, we turned to FIN for support through their events, webinars, training sessions, and resources. Their guidance became our go-to solution in difficult situations.

*'We use FINs quality indicators to challenge our staff. We would use the key indicators to form our questions and request data to support their answers.'* **Charlotte**

## WHAT BENEFITS DO YOU EXPECT FOR YOUR BUSINESS AS A RESULT OF BEING OUTSTANDING?

"Awareness and sales have increased significantly, prompting us to recruit two additional sales and marketing leads to meet the growing demand. The team's confidence has soared, and we've celebrated these successes, fostering a culture of enthusiasm and a drive to continuously improve. Additionally, we've launched Debut Professional Associates, due to the influx of requests for help. This is a mentorship program aimed at supporting start-up and new training providers—a natural progression for our learners who are now ready to share their expertise and educate the next generation.



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### HOW IMPORTANT WAS DEVELOPING AN ACCURATE SAR AND QIP IN IMPROVING QUALITY AND STANDARDS TO GET TO OUTSTANDING?

Your SAR is crucial. While ours was accurate at the time and we were modest in our assessment, we had developed it nine months prior to the visit, during which significant improvements were made. We had to challenge our SAR grading, as the inspectors initially assumed us a 'Good' grade, which we graded our self on our SAR in November 2023. Developing our SAR helped identify areas for improvement, and we were aware of the tight timeframe for making those changes so could address what was top priority. A position statement is essential and should be updated monthly to reflect your current status and demonstrate ongoing progress. Our QIP has been a working document since 2019. Inspectors could see the progress made over the five years and how we revisited and improved upon earlier areas. They commended our QIP and noted that tutors were fully invested in both the SAR and QIP processes.

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### IF YOU COULD GO BACK TWO OR THREE YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY, IF ANYTHING?

To avoid making drastic changes and instead focus on continuous improvement based on relevant feedback, we initially faced confusion from listening to too many external advisors, which often led us to revert to previous methods and processes. Eventually, we decided to concentrate on guidance from industry experts and found an Ofsted Outstanding mentor within the sector. We realised the need to restructure our staff earlier to ensure they were confident, competent, and knowledgeable in their areas of expertise. This became evident as we approached the 5-year inspection mark, with only 12 months remaining to prepare. Since introducing the BUD learner platform, we have recognised that we needed this tool much sooner to collect and analyse data more effectively.

## THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS

A huge thank you from all of FIN for your contribution to this members spot light and a massive congratulations for your inspection success.