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Mr Grant Langfield
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Social Enterprise Kent
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Dear Mr Langfield

Short inspection of Social Enterprise Kent (SEK)

Following the short inspection on 20 and 21 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in June 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

You have moved quickly and successfully from providing Train to Gain awards in 2010 to delivering a wide range of successful apprenticeships as a lead provider in Kent. Leaders have maintained the good quality teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices since the previous inspection. Employers are very supportive of SEK and value the high level of technical skills that apprentices bring to their companies. SEK works in partnership with a small number of good and very experienced training providers. Leaders have managed these providers very well over recent years and ceased contracts with those who perform poorly. This is reflected in the consistently high success rates for most apprentices. You and your partners work well with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). This ensures that you continue to offer training that meets local and national employment opportunities. You also provide effective support to the local community, including a five-year programme to improve mental and physical health in older people and a programme to promote sustainable employment for those who suffer from mental ill health.

The large majority of apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully and an increasing number do so within the planned time. Most apprentices enter full-time employment with their employer on completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentices, particularly those on food manufacturing, information and communication technology, and health and social care programmes, demonstrate very high levels of

technical and personal skills. They quickly develop the skills and attitudes to make a significant contribution to their employer's business.

Teaching, learning and assessment continue to be of a high standard. Apprentices on higher-level learning programmes benefit from particularly good and flexible training and assessment practices. Assessors are very experienced and well qualified. They use electronic recording systems, where appropriate, very effectively to collect and store evidence for assessment purposes. Assessors review apprentices' progress regularly and frequently, and most benefit from thorough discussions and detailed verbal feedback. These discussions result in clear targets to help them progress.

Managers monitor teaching, learning and assessment effectively, particularly where they are delivered by partners. You use partnership meetings constructively to share best practice. However, you recognise that targets in the quality improvement plan are directed primarily at improving assessment, and more emphasis is needed on raising further the quality of teaching and learning.

Managers have access to a wide range of information on the progress apprentices make. Managers have made sure that the analysis of performance is accurate, useful and well informed by contributions from partners. You monitor partners' performance extremely well. You have implemented successfully a cohesive management structure within SEK that ensures that apprentices make good progress. This is reflected in the high success rates and the increased number of apprentices completing on time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and take appropriate action to safeguard learners. SEK and partners have a high regard for safety and clearly written references in apprentices' handbooks are comprehensive. Staff have included a section with hints and tips about e-safety which learners find useful. References to legislation and training materials are detailed and apprentices show a good understanding of safeguarding and the Prevent agenda. Assessors challenge apprentices' understanding very well during reviews, and most apprentices are aware of safeguarding reporting processes and staff to whom they can go to if the need arises.

All SEK and partnership staff have received online safeguarding and Prevent training and police officers have recently delivered Prevent training directly to staff. Senior SEK managers keep a comprehensive record of staff with appropriate clearance and diligently check with partners to ensure that records are kept up to date. Any concerns raised are recorded in detail and actions taken are noted. However, the outcomes of actions taken are not always recorded sufficiently. Managers have made good progress in implementing the requirements of the Prevent duty and this impetus needs to be maintained.

Inspection findings

- Managers have maintained good outcomes for apprentices and continue to provide good-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Partners continue to provide high-quality training through a well-developed network of respected and successful employers in Kent and across the South-East. Assessors and employer staff work very closely together to match the requirements of the apprenticeship programme and employers' needs. Assessors are very flexible and arrange visits to fit in with employer requirements. This is particularly important in companies associated with food manufacturing, for example bakeries. Apprentices learn well, are assessed accurately and achieve successfully.
- Managers monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Partners have their own comprehensive arrangements and the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment is shared with SEK. In addition SEK staff carry out observations of a wide range of activities, for example recruitment and initial assessment. Managers use the outcomes of the quality monitoring to share existing good practice and develop ways of improving quality and consistency. However, you have recognised the need to focus more on raising the quality of teaching and learning to realise your ambition of being an outstanding provider.
- SEK and partnership staff provide good advice and guidance to apprentices at the start of their programme. Apprentices on health and social care programmes complete an assignment on developing a career path as part of their qualification. Employers support apprentices well by providing sound advice on future career paths, particularly for specialised training. Most apprentices continue into permanent employment with their companies when they finish their apprenticeship.
- Managers communicate very effectively with partners to ensure that concerns and underperformance are identified quickly, and support them well to resolve issues. Data are supplied by partners to SEK managers, and apprentices at risk of not completing on time are clearly identified. SEK staff responsible for managing partners ensure that any issues are quickly resolved. The strong management approach to monitoring of performance is reflected in the improved success rates.
- Assessors monitor the progress of apprentices well in the workplace and provide very good verbal feedback. Most apprentices have a thorough understanding of what they need to do to complete their apprenticeship. Apprentices are supported well and given high standards of support by employers and assessors, particularly with developing their English and mathematics skills. However, in a minority of cases, employers are not involved sufficiently in the review process. A minority of apprentices do not progress as quickly as they are able as the feedback they receive is often too brief and does not provide them with sufficiently clear targets to help them to improve.
- Outcomes for apprentices are good. The large majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship within planned and expected timescales and progress to full

employment. They gain very good technical and employability skills and are able to apply these well at work.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- managers' monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment results in challenging actions to improve further the quality of teaching and learning and to help SEK achieve its aspiration of being an outstanding provider
- employers' contributions to apprentices' reviews are improved, and feedback provides clear targets to help all apprentices achieve their full potential
- the recording of the outcomes of actions taken to address any safeguarding issues is sufficiently detailed.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bob Cowdrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by you, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, as nominee. We met with you, your programme managers and a sample of apprentices, assessors, trainers and employers. We observed apprentices at work and looked at their assessed work. We reviewed key policies and documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We also considered the views of apprentices and employers.