

# Key6 Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

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| <b>Unique reference number:</b> | 1273215  |
| <b>Name of lead inspector:</b>  | Paul Cocker HMI  |
| <b>Inspection date(s):</b>      | 15–16 February 2018  |
| <b>Type of provider:</b>        | Independent learning provider                              |
| <b>Address:</b>                 | 1a Village Road<br>Oxton Village<br>Birkenhead<br>CH43 5SR |

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Key6 Group was formed in 2015 by two co-founding directors and the chairman. In July 2017, they started training apprentices funded through the apprenticeship levy, swiftly recruiting apprentices in a relatively short space of time. They currently provide training for 208 apprentices. More than three quarters of apprentices are enrolled on management or leadership apprenticeships at levels 3, 4 and 5. The vast majority of the remaining apprentices are enrolled on apprenticeships in business administration, customer services and facilities management at levels 2 and 3.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?**

#### **Insufficient progress**

Key6 Group apprenticeships are not fit for purpose. Directors have failed to ensure that there is strategic direction or effective operational management of their apprenticeship programmes. This results in most apprentices receiving a poor standard of training. Apprentices do not develop the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that they need to help them to progress in their career.

Directors do not ensure that the employees they recruit as apprentices are suitable for the programme. The vast majority of apprentices met by inspectors state that their programme is not meeting their needs. Many apprentices reported to inspectors that they do not develop new skills or enhance their existing knowledge on their apprenticeship. Most apprentices are unhappy that their tutors merely ask them to collect evidence of work, which they have completed as part of their current job role, to enable them to accredit existing skills and knowledge. Apprentices report that they are not learning anything new on their apprenticeship; instead, they 'shoehorn' existing work in a portfolio to get a free qualification.

Directors are unjustifiably optimistic in their evaluation that they provide high standards of teaching, learning and assessment to apprentices. Their marketing literature promotes Key6 Group as being a 'gold standard global education and training provider'. Directors do not recognise the significant and severe weaknesses in apprentices' experiences. Most learners who started their apprenticeship between July and September 2017 have not completed any work, and have attended only four one-day workshops and two one-to-one sessions.

Directors have been slow to act on the negative feedback received from apprentices. Inspectors agree with apprentice comments that staff do not provide effective feedback on the work they need to do to make progress on their apprenticeship. This results in many apprentices becoming disillusioned. A large minority leave their apprenticeship early. A survey completed by apprentices exemplifies many of the apprentices' concerns, which include their struggling to understand theoretical concepts taught in workshops, frustration in attending training sessions that are not suitable for their job role, not receiving enough support to help them make progress on their programme, and the apprenticeship not meeting the expectations set out at the beginning of the programme.

The management of the apprenticeship programme is poor. Directors have not ensured that there are sufficient staff with the required skills to ensure that apprentices receive a good standard of training. Directors do not ensure that they structure and manage learning programmes effectively, or that these meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Most apprentices do not develop new skills or acquire new knowledge as they do not receive their entitlement to off-the-job learning, a key requirement of an apprenticeship. Several apprentices reported to inspectors that they had plans to spend one day a week working on their apprenticeship assignments, but Key6 staff failed to provide a tutor to deliver any teaching or provide any direction on what the apprentices should be studying. Since starting their programme in July 2017, a small minority of apprentices at one employer have not had any lessons or reviews because there was no tutor available to teach them until very recently.

Governance is poor. The board of directors do not hold the managing director and the director of education to account for the poor teaching, learning and assessment and weak progress that apprentices make on their apprenticeship. Governors have only met once, in July 2017. Directors were unable to provide any documents as to the purpose of this meeting. Directors' lack of oversight of the standard of education and training that apprentices receive has a demonstrable effect on the poor standards at Key6 Group.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?**      **Insufficient progress**

Tutors have been ineffective in providing apprentices with at least a good standard of training. Due to tutor shortages, apprentices have experienced a significant amount of instability in their apprenticeship. Most apprentices have completed very little work and they are making very slow progress. Too few apprentices have a good understanding of their planned completion date, and many are unaware of what they need to do to complete their apprenticeship because of the poor communications with Key6 Group staff.

Directors and tutors do not know what progress apprentices make on their programmes. Directors do not set clear guidelines on how apprentices' existing skills and knowledge will be appraised or how further learning will be acquired. A

significant proportion of apprentices who began their apprenticeship five months ago have yet to complete baseline assessments in English and mathematics or subject-specific assessments. Consequently, no planning of learning has taken place for these apprentices and they have learned very little. Where apprentices have completed their baseline assessments, tutors do not use the results effectively to plan learning that meets their specific needs.

Tutors do not set apprentices skill, knowledge or behaviour milestones throughout their programme to ensure that their progress can be measured. Too many tutors provide unhelpful feedback to apprentices who need extensive support. For example, level 5 apprentices in management who have low-level skills in English are asked to practise higher-level English functional skills exams without any tuition. The same apprentices complete subject assessments at the start of their programme that are two levels below what they are studying. These results are, therefore, meaningless and do not provide tutors with a clear indication of apprentices' prior skills and knowledge to plan a relevant training programme. Tutors in facilities management do not map apprentices' submitted work to apprenticeship criteria; as a result, their progress is not recorded.

Almost all apprentices are not developing the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to equip them to complete their end-point assessment. This is a result of poor planning of learning and apprentices not receiving their entitlement to off-the-job learning.

Directors have not ensured that apprentices receive their apprenticeship entitlement to off-the-job training. Too many apprentices are unable to attend off-the-job training due to high workloads, and there are no opportunities for them to catch up when they do not attend sessions. Apprentices have the opportunity to attend 10 one-day workshops and use an accompanying study booklet. They are expected to complete apprenticeship workbooks with no, or very little, support from tutors.

Many apprentices have been employed in the same job role, at the same employer, for a significant period of time. They do not develop new skills, acquire new knowledge or have any planned career pathways to gain promotion due to poor support from tutors. For example, many apprentices have not received their planned fortnightly meetings with their tutor, which frustrates apprentices. The large majority of apprentices are not even aware that they are an apprentice, and identify themselves as studying a level 5 management course. The model deployed by Key6 Group is an assessment model, which accredits existing skills and knowledge, as opposed to a learning model, in which apprentices learn and increase their skills and knowledge.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?**      **Insufficient progress**

Safeguarding arrangements are not effective.

Directors have created safeguarding policies and procedures, which include the 'Prevent' duty. Within these policies and procedures are guidelines on the referral of any concerns in relation to safeguarding or the 'Prevent' duty. While the policies and procedures were presented to inspectors, these had yet to be ratified by the board of directors.

Directors have failed to ensure that the designated safeguarding officer has received the appropriate training to allow her to execute fully the role. However, there are plans for the designated safeguarding officer to complete appropriate training imminently. Prior to her appointment in January 2018, there was no trained designated safeguarding officer at Key6 Group.

Staff have received basic online training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, but they have not yet received any training on how and when to report any concerns that they may have. At the time of the monitoring visit, no referrals had been made using Key6 Group's safeguarding procedures.

Directors have been unsuccessful in establishing relationships with external partners to provide support to apprentices who may be at risk.

The vast majority of apprentices met have a good understanding of safeguarding and the risks posed by those who seek to promote extremist views. They are aware of whom they should contact at both their employer and Key6 Group Limited, should they have any concerns. Inspectors did not observe any apprentices that were at immediate risk.

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