

J & S Blackhurst Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Elaine Price HMI

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Address: Unit 7
Ferry Road Office Park
Ferry Road
Riversway
Preston
PR2 2YH

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.

J & S Blackhurst Limited trades under the name of Jigsaw Training. The company was formed in 1997 by two directors. For the past 14 years the company has specialised in providing apprenticeship training for workers in the facilities-management sector. In May 2017, Jigsaw Training became a prime-contract independent training provider; before that it operated as a subcontractor. There are currently 281 apprentices enrolled and funded through the apprenticeship levy. Forty-nine apprentices are studying on level 3 programmes and 232 are studying at level 2. The majority are enrolled on frameworks in facilities services and 35 are studying new standards in property-maintenance operative, team-leader supervisor and facilities management.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Directors and senior leaders have set a clear strategy to focus on delivering high-quality training to apprentices employed in the facilities-management sector. They have an ambitious vision to be an outstanding provider of apprenticeships to develop new talent and build a highly skilled workforce for the facilities-management sector.

Jigsaw Training works with a range of employers, which include high-profile national companies. Both directors have frequent contact with the senior staff at the companies they work with and together they monitor the performance of their apprentices effectively. Employers spoken to during the monitoring visit commented very favourably on the knowledge and skills that apprentices develop as a result of their training and on their behavioural changes at work. Employers are clear about the commercial benefits of the apprenticeship programme in developing a skilled and well-qualified workforce, including the development of employees' supervisory skills so that they may gain promotion.

Since becoming a levy-funded provider, the directors and senior leaders at Jigsaw Training have strengthened the management team. They have structured the organisation to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Managers are clear about their role in monitoring tutors' performance and apprentices' progress. Tutors are well qualified and are supported to improve their practice through continuous professional development. The newly promoted

vocational-programme managers require further training to provide them with the skills and confidence to manage underperformance effectively. Senior leaders are continually amending and refining what they and their staff do to improve apprentices' experiences.

Directors and senior leaders have set high expectations of their staff. They use detailed reports and regular monthly meetings to monitor vocational-programme managers' and tutors' work against key performance indicators, including apprentices' progress. Where apprentices' performance falls short of expectations it is quickly identified and senior leaders monitor their progress more closely.

Since becoming a levy-funded provider, directors and senior leaders have identified accurately the majority of weaknesses that exist. They have already implemented a number of changes to practices to bring about improvements. For example, senior leaders have recently created an apprentice log book so that off-the-job training can be recorded accurately and apprentices can reflect on how this relates to their on-the-job training and the improvement of their skills and work practices. Managers recognise the need to respond more swiftly to eradicate some of the poor aspects of teaching, learning and assessment that they have identified. Tutors need clear targets against which to improve their performance and measure their progress.

Not all employers and apprentices have a good enough understanding of the entitlement to the off-the-job training requirement of the apprenticeship programme. Directors and senior leaders are aware that a few apprentices are not released on a regular basis from their job and of the adverse impact that this has on their progress. However, apprentices on management programmes at level 3 get regular study days.

Senior leaders have identified that the recording of activities and allocation of time to meet the off-the-job demands of their programmes need to be improved. Senior leaders agree with inspectors that compliance with off-the-job training requirements needs to be guaranteed as a matter of urgency.

Directors are currently reviewing the service-level agreements they have in place with employers to ensure that employers and apprentices commit fully to the apprenticeship programme. A few companies that Jigsaw Training works with do not recruit their staff to the correct apprenticeship training programme. Directors have already taken the decision not to recruit any further apprentices from one company that does not have this commitment.

Directors are currently reviewing their options to put governance arrangements in place to help Jigsaw Training move forward and realise its ambition.

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

Most apprentices spoken to during the monitoring visit were developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, apprentices spoke of how they are now better able to manage their teams and how they now regard themselves as having a professional role at work, rather than being 'just a supervisor'.

Most apprentices know how the knowledge and skills they are gaining will help them in their current job role and in progressing in their career. Not all apprentices are aware of their options following completion of their apprenticeship.

Most apprentices receive regular visits and reviews from their tutors. When apprentices fall behind, tutors take action to help them get back on track. Apprentices value the support they receive from their tutors. A minority of apprentices have not had reviews in accordance with Jigsaw Training's policy of monthly visits.

Senior leaders and managers have implemented appropriate quality-monitoring processes. They review vocational areas on a regular basis through a newly implemented observation of teaching, learning and assessment process. Each of the three vocational areas has had a quality review and these have resulted in an action plan to tackle weaknesses identified and improve the quality of the apprentices' experiences. Internal quality assurers review the standards of apprentices' work on a regular basis. They provide feedback to tutors and apprentices on how apprentices can improve. The impact of these quality reviews is not consistent. Senior leaders do not have sufficiently detailed oversight of the actions or pace of improvement that are required so that all apprentices receive high-quality training.

Tutors' planning of the new standards apprenticeship programmes is good. Clear milestones are set so that tutors, employers and apprentices can monitor the progress and development of skills, knowledge and behaviours. Apprentices and employers understand what they need to do to be well prepared for their end-point assessment.

Most tutors provide apprentices with good initial information, advice and guidance. Apprentices undergo an initial skills scan that identifies their current occupational competencies and their levels of competency in English and mathematics. This ensures that most apprentices are placed on the correct programme and level. Where potential apprentices' prior knowledge and skills levels indicate that the apprenticeship is not the most appropriate programme, they are guided to alternative providers.

The results of the apprentices' starting-point assessments are not always used well enough by tutors to plan training and development. Tutors do not set and record detailed and useful learning and development targets for their apprentices. They focus too much on the completion of qualification units rather than on the specific acquisition of knowledge and skills and the development of relevant behaviours to help them succeed in their apprenticeship programme and at work. Consequently, a minority of apprentices make slow progress from their starting points and are not achieving their potential.

Senior leaders have implemented a new electronic system for recording and monitoring apprentices' progress. This is not yet fully operational. Senior leaders are aware of the need to monitor the development of all apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours from their starting points more accurately.

Tutors do not routinely link off-the-job training to the apprentices' job role. They do not question apprentices sufficiently to check their understanding or to enable them to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge.

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

Senior leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures state clearly the responsibilities and duties of managers and staff in safeguarding their apprentices. Procedures set out clear guidance for staff on how to identify and report any concerns they have.

Senior leaders and managers carry out safe recruitment and selection procedures when employing staff. Following risk assessments, appropriate checks are carried out on all staff.

Senior leaders and managers are meeting their legal obligations with regard to the 'Prevent' duty. A 'Prevent' duty/safeguarding action plan is in place which is updated regularly. Senior leaders review policies, procedures and training regularly and identify actions that are needed to ensure that safeguarding arrangements remain effective.

There is an appointed designated safeguarding officer and senior leaders have identified a need for a deputy safeguarding officer. The designated safeguarding officer has appropriate training. Senior leaders and managers ensure that all staff receive appropriate online training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty during their induction. Training for tutors is updated annually.

Tutors are competent and have support in integrating safeguarding, British values and the threats presented by radicalisation and extremism into their delivery of the

apprenticeship programmes. Most apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. For example, when working in security, apprentices are aware of the need to be vigilant in checking bags for public safety. Directors do not yet receive regular reports on any safeguarding or safeguarding-related incidents to assure themselves that they are complying with their legislative duties.

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