

# Youthforce

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Kate Hill, HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## 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. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was first announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Youthforce was created in 2005 by the current chief executive officer and is based in Hove, Sussex. In 2012, Youthforce started working as a subcontractor for two training providers offering business administration and teaching assistant apprenticeships. The company started training its own apprentices using levy funding in May 2017. Youthforce currently provides training for around 130 apprentices, of whom 90 are on frameworks and 40 are on standards-based programmes. Apprenticeships are offered at levels 2 and 3, and most apprentices are on courses in education and training, working as teaching assistants. Since April 2018, Youthforce has stopped enrolling apprentices on education and training apprenticeships and is focusing on laboratory technicians and infrastructure technicians to meet regional and national priorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

### Themes

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have set a clear strategy to expand and develop new apprenticeships in STEM subjects to meet a national skills shortage. They are determined to succeed and have developed the skills of their staff well, so that they can make a positive contribution to the industries they serve.

Since Youthforce became a levy-funded provider, its leaders and managers have strengthened the management team. They have structured the organisation to ensure that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Managers are sure of their role in monitoring tutors' performance and apprentices' progress.

Links with employers are across a range of sector areas and are good. Leaders and managers have worked sufficiently well to make sure that employers and apprentices clearly understand the requirements of both standards-based and framework apprenticeships. Managers spend time with employers before enrolling apprentices to help them understand their responsibilities and to make sure that they meet their employment and skills needs. Apprentices and employers understand what they need to do to be well prepared for their end-point assessment.

Employers make sure that apprentices fulfil the requirements of apprenticeship standards for on- and off-the-job training, and most support their apprentices well to meet these requirements and acquire new skills. For example, off-the-job training for laboratory technicians includes frequent three-day training blocks and extensive shadowing programmes. These allow apprentices to broaden their understanding of other roles within the laboratory and appreciate how their work fits into the bigger picture. It also gives them the opportunity to identify roles that they might want to move into in the future.

Leaders and managers have rightly identified that the recording of activities and allocation of time to meet the off-the-job demands of their programmes need to be improved.

Employers appreciate highly the knowledge and skills that apprentices develop. They are clear about the benefits of employing apprentices. Employers also value the fact that apprentices become skilled technicians who support their industry.

Leaders and managers monitor the progress apprentices make thoroughly through monthly quality review meetings. When apprentices do not make the expected progress, managers intervene promptly and support learners to achieve. For example, managers agreed weekly targets and provided frequent workshops for an education support apprentice who was falling behind with his assignments.

Leaders and managers accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses that exist in their company. However, the improvement plan that they use to monitor and bring about change does not include all the identified weaknesses. As a result, managers have no way of knowing whether they make improvements in all the required areas, nor what the impact is on apprentices.

Leaders and managers use monthly quality and standardisation meetings effectively to improve assessors' and tutors' professional practice, monitor apprentices' progress and share good practice.

Managers have made sure that all tutors and assessors have appropriate qualifications and experience to be effective in helping apprentices learn. Managers have ensured that staff receive the correct training and support to develop the required competencies and skills. They have recently employed some highly qualified and experienced scientists to support apprentices during their studies.

**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**

Apprentices develop high levels of knowledge and the behaviours and skills that employers recognise as being very beneficial in the workplace. Apprentices swiftly undertake increasingly complex duties and responsibilities. Apprentices know that the knowledge and skills they gain will help them in their current job and in progressing in their career. A small minority of apprentices are not aware of their options following completion of their apprenticeship.

Laboratory technician apprentices working for construction companies involved in the building of Hinkley Point C nuclear power station benefit from recently improved teaching, learning and assessment. Apprentices and employers value highly the professional and effective approach taken by tutors to ensure that they meet apprentices' needs. A science, technology and engineering specialist, who has a strong focus on teaching and learning, supports tutors and assessors well.

The vast majority of apprentices benefit from frequent visits and reviews from their assessors and make good progress. When apprentices fall behind, tutors take action to help them get back on track. Apprentices value the support they receive from their tutors. However, written feedback on apprentices' assignments does not include the correction of poor grammar, punctuation and spelling to make sure they do not repeat their errors. A minority of assessors and tutors do not emphasise the importance of good mathematical and English skills in the workplace.

The Youthforce talent acquisition team selects and recruits the right apprentices to meet employers' needs or helps employers to do this for themselves. Apprentices complete an initial skills scan that identifies their current occupational competencies and their abilities in English and mathematics. This ensures that the vast majority of apprentices are on the correct programme and level. A minority of tutors and assessors do not make good use of the information they have about apprentices' starting points to plan training and development. These tutors and assessors do not set and record detailed and useful learning and skills development targets for their apprentices that help them develop their skills.

Education and training apprentices benefit from high levels of on- and off-the-job training. They receive training in mandatory topics such as safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and first aid, and also benefit from courses that help them to develop their awareness and understanding of the range of complex support needs of their pupils. As a result, they develop useful strategies to employ in the classroom, for example, to support pupils with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Leaders and managers have implemented a new electronic system for recording and monitoring apprentices' progress. Tutors and assessors do not yet use this effectively and, as a result, it does not accurately reflect the progress of apprentices.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on safeguarding learners. As a result, learners are safe and feel safe.

Leaders and managers have appropriate procedures in place to keep apprentices safe, and their staff and employers understand and use these well. Staff have recently received training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to improve their understanding. Managers investigate the reported concerns promptly and record them in detail. They use links with local agencies, such as the local police, when necessary to support individuals.

Apprentices have a basic understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and recall their training on these matters during their induction. However, managers have not ensured that staff broaden apprentices' awareness and understanding of these dangers during their programmes. As a result, they are not able to recognise how the dangers of radicalisation and extremism might apply to their lives.

The appointed designated safeguarding officer has completed appropriate training. Managers ensure that safe recruitment practices are in place and all staff have had the relevant employment checks.

Employers understand that Youthforce staff support and help laboratory technician apprentices to recognise the vital role that health and safety play in their workplace.

Teaching assistant apprentices have a good understanding of their employers' policies relating to safeguarding. In one setting, an apprentice participates in the after-school escort service to bus stops and local shops and makes sure that pupils feel safe in and around the school and the local community.

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