

Northwest Education and Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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 themes set out below.

Northwest Education and Training Limited (NWEAT) started in 2013 as a provider of training to the logistics and manufacturing sectors and as a subcontractor to a private training provider and a local college. In 2017, it gained registration to receive public funding for the delivery of training in its own right. NWEAT provides training for 129 apprentices and 34 adult learners. Half of the apprentices study at level 2, almost half at level 3 and very few at level 5. Around two thirds of apprentices are on frameworks and one third on standards apprenticeships. Almost three quarters take apprenticeships in business, administration and management, and the rest follow passenger transport, food industry and warehousing and manufacturing apprenticeships. Almost all adult learners study functional skills at entry level and a few study level 2 health and social care.

Themes

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

Reasonable

Directors use a clear strategy to focus on high-quality training that meets the needs of employers and results in sustainable job outcomes. Leaders and managers have transferred successfully their previous experience of managing provision as subcontractors to the development and delivery of their new direct contract.

Leaders and managers work very well with employers in the manufacturing and logistics industries to meet their staffing needs. They focus on developing programmes to meet skills and staff shortages in areas such as food manufacturing and passenger transport. For example, one employer, whose priority is to modernise her business, has worked closely with NWEAT to develop her apprenticeship to improve significantly the team-leadership skills of existing and new employees. As a result, apprentices now track staff absence and carry out return-to-work interviews, which have helped to improve staff retention.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices with integrity and ensure that each learner is on the right level of programme. They work closely with employers to select appropriate apprentices and have reduced the numbers of apprentices, for example

in the transport sector, where employers are unable to commit to sufficient off-the-job training hours. The overwhelming majority of apprentices recruited since August 2017 remain on their apprenticeship programmes and are on track to achieve their qualifications.

Directors and leaders plan effectively for growth. They are currently advertising for a new tutor and a new administrator to meet expected expansion.

Leaders have put in place a quality improvement plan which includes areas for improvement, such as target setting. However, the plan does not contain enough focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or have detailed and measurable targets.

Directors understand the strengths and weaknesses of NWEAT. They work very closely together in ensuring that they maintain the quality of the provision. Although they meet formally as a board every quarter, directors make many of their strategic decisions informally on a day-to-day basis. The reports that directors receive at board level lack sufficient detail. They contain too great a focus on finance and quality compliance and not enough on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and learners' progress.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices benefit from worthwhile and well-organised training programmes. Their model of delivery for apprenticeships includes a hub training space based at each employer, which is staffed by NWEAT assessors. Around three quarters of apprentices are existing employees and a quarter of apprentices are new recruits. Apprentices develop a wide range of new occupationally specific skills, knowledge and behaviours that benefit their employers' businesses. For example, in one company, apprentices apply what they have learned to projects in which they contribute ideas to reduce waste and water usage. This has directly resulted in improving the yields and productivity of the business.

Apprentices develop well their English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills. Apprentices who speak English as an additional language improve their verbal communication and consequently their confidence in speaking to fellow employees and managers in their workplaces. Apprentices are more able to understand, for example, key performance indicators, as a result of improving their mathematical skills.

Assessors use their enthusiasm and knowledge about their subject areas to support apprentices to make good progress on their programmes. Apprentices have regular reviews, which assessors link effectively to their job role.

Leaders and staff monitor and track apprentices' progress against milestones that have been set for the completion of their framework or standards. They do not measure the progress that apprentices make from their starting points in acquiring

new knowledge and skills. Although apprentices undertake initial skills scans to establish their individual starting points, leaders set apprentices the same milestones to complete within the same timeframe for each apprenticeship. As a result, leaders do not know whether apprentices make good, better or slow progress.

Leaders and managers have clear arrangements in place to monitor the quality of the provision and of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers, however, focus too much during observations on what the assessor does and not enough on the progress apprentices make. As a result, subsequent assessor action plans do not focus enough on what the assessor needs to do to enable apprentices to reach their potential.

The vast majority of apprentices undertake sufficient off-the-job training, which managers record and track effectively. Apprentices log the hours they complete, including what they have learned and how they will put this into practice in their job, but not all apprentices do this consistently well.

Employers are very supportive of apprentices' training and have put in place employees who act as mentors for apprentices at work. Employers do not always involve themselves in planning the coordination of apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices do not always receive sufficient challenge to reach their potential.

What progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? **Reasonable**

Leaders and managers have designed programmes to meet the demands of employers and the needs of learners. For example, they have developed a partnership with Jobcentre Plus, employers and transport authorities to establish a work-based academy that provides opportunities for unemployed adults to be recruited as bus drivers. Managers have developed a successful partnership with companies in the food processing sector to deliver functional skills training so that learners improve their communication in spoken and written English at work. Employers aim to support these employees to a level where they progress onto apprenticeships in team leadership. Leaders are extending their work to offenders and ex-offenders to recruit them into work-based sector academies, to increase their chances of securing employment.

Adult learners develop good employability skills in areas such as customer service, team working, and their understanding of health and safety. These prepare them well for work in specific industries. For many long-term unemployed learners, the opportunity to work together as a group builds their confidence and consequently a high proportion of these learners have gained jobs or gone into further training.

Learners improve their English skills, particularly the verbal communication skills they need to function in the workplace. Employers in the food processing sector who

employ large numbers of employees from Eastern Europe value highly the functional skills training that NWEAT delivers. Employers are committed to enabling these learners to progress onto higher-level functional skills qualifications or onto apprenticeships.

Tutors provide helpful and constructive feedback to learners on employability and functional skills courses about how to improve their written English skills. As a result, learners improve their spelling and grammar.

Tutors are knowledgeable and have many years' experience in their industry. In the transport and logistics sector, for example, tutors deliver employability courses for the work-sector academy for bus drivers. Learners are very positive about tutors' current knowledge regarding how the bus industry operates and the direct link that they make with employers.

Adult learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. The vast majority of learners remain on their programmes until the end and achievement rates are high.

The arrangements for quality assurance and improvement of training and teaching for adult learners are the same as those for apprentices and, as such, have identical strengths and areas for improvement. The tracking and monitoring of adult learners' progress does not reflect how well learners have developed from their starting points.

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

Senior leaders and managers have established effective safeguarding policies, practices and training and they ensure that safeguarding is effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy have up-to-date appropriate training and are senior leaders at NWEAT. Staff undertake suitable training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, which they use successfully to develop apprentices' and adult learners' understanding of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices and adult learners know how to keep themselves safe in and outside of work. For example, passenger transport apprentices receive training about 'Operation fairway' from their assessor. This enables them to look out for potential risks associated with their industry that may lead to a terrorist incident.

The safeguarding policy includes details and procedures about the 'Prevent' duty, safer recruitment and safeguarding. It includes the responsibilities of staff and managers in safeguarding apprentices and vulnerable adults. Staff and the DSL follow these procedures effectively. The DSL makes appropriate and timely links with external agencies to ensure that support is available for vulnerable learners who are at risk of danger from others. Apprentices and learners feel safe and inspectors did not observe any who were at immediate risk.

Leaders have put in place a single central register. All relevant staff have completed enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

The 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan are in place, but it is not clear how the actions will reduce the risk of radicalisation and extremism. The DSL is in the process of reviewing and revising the risk assessment and action plan to make them more effective in practice.

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