

Halifax Opportunities Trust

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Rebecca Clare HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider
Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre

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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.

Halifax Opportunities Trust is a registered charity and social enterprise, founded in 2001. Its aims are to alleviate poverty and unemployment through education, enterprise and childcare. The trust, which operates 11 children's centres, is based in Park Ward in Halifax and is active throughout Kirklees and Calderdale. In 2017, it began training apprentices funded through the apprenticeship levy, primarily in children's centres and schools. The Trust currently provides training for 22 intermediate- and advanced-level apprentices on frameworks in early years, playwork, supporting teaching and learning, and business administration in schools and children's centres.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have a well-planned and sustainable strategy for developing their apprenticeship provision, which builds on the trust's other successful charitable activities in the childcare and education sectors. They have a clear vision to provide apprenticeships that support their charitable aim of regenerating communities in Calderdale and Kirklees through helping families out of poverty. Plans for growth are measured, well tested, and set in the context of the organisation's considerable capacity and experience as a large employer in Calderdale. There are no plans to expand into areas where staff have no experience. All current apprentices are enrolled on apprenticeship frameworks. Leaders and managers are well prepared to deliver standards-based apprenticeships as they become available.

Leaders and managers have an accurate and detailed understanding of the quality of the apprenticeship provision. They identify expertly the provision's significant strengths and the few areas for development. Plans to improve the quality of provision are sensible, time bound and well focused. Managers frequently review progress towards improvement targets. Leaders and managers have realistic ambitions to provide apprenticeships of the highest quality.

Leaders and managers ensure that programmes meet the requirements for successful apprenticeship provision. Managers work with senior leaders in the local authority, children's centres and schools to ensure that employers have a sound understanding of the requirements of an apprenticeship. They provide useful advice and guidance to employers to help them to meet these requirements. As a result, all apprentices receive their entitlement to on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices benefit from monthly meetings with tutors and a weekly allocation of time for training at work. They improve their personal skills well through an innovative series of personal development workshops that give them regular opportunities to undertake peer learning alongside fellow apprentices.

Managers and tutors are very experienced in their vocational areas. They hold relevant qualifications, including in English and mathematics. Tutors are highly committed to their own professional development and undertake a wealth of high-quality staff training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. Effective recruitment by senior managers ensures that apprentices benefit from highly competent staff who are committed to making the apprenticeship a success. Managers have sensible plans in place to recruit further teaching staff as apprenticeship provision grows.

Managers work closely with employers to ensure that the recruitment of apprentices is open and fair. They advertise apprenticeships on the local authority's recruitment website and work closely with the local authority, children's centres and schools during the recruitment process. Almost all apprentices are new to their posts. A number have recently completed A levels and hope to follow an apprenticeship route into teaching. Several apprentices are children looked after and are taking their first steps into employment.

Apprentices, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefit from high-quality careers information, advice and guidance. This helps them to enrol onto the right courses to fulfil their career goals and to make positive next steps after completing their programme. Apprenticeship managers draw on the expertise and insight available from the wider trust, including from staff delivering courses in English for speakers of other languages and employability provision. This enhances the information, advice and guidance that apprentices receive. Apprentices access advice on the local authority's recruitment site, where local teaching assistant jobs are advertised. When a school or children's centre does not have the funding to retain an apprentice at the end of the programme, apprenticeship managers ensure that the apprentice works with an employment coach to find a post elsewhere.

Managers track the progress of apprentices carefully. They have a thorough understanding of apprentices' progress and intervene quickly and effectively to ensure that apprentices get back on track if their progress is delayed. For example, they provide extra reviews, resources and telephone support. In some cases, extra training is scheduled during school summer holidays. As a result of this well-planned support, and of the high-quality information, advice and guidance, all levy-funded

apprentices have remained on their courses and all make at least the progress expected of them.

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

Tutors use initial assessment well to identify and record apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours at the beginning of their programme. They use this information extremely well to plan individual learning sessions that enable apprentices to develop new, occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices make a valuable contribution to their workplace, and their employers greatly appreciate the skills that apprentices develop.

Tutors develop a comprehensive training plan for each apprentice based on his or her individual programme and work context. As a result, apprentices have a detailed understanding of the work that they need to produce during their course.

Tutors plan demanding assessments very effectively; consequently, apprentices are challenged to demonstrate their new skills and understanding to a high level. Apprentices value the support and the challenge that they receive from their tutors and recognise that this helps them to make good progress and achieve their potential.

Tutors provide very helpful feedback to apprentices that lets them know where there are gaps in their portfolios or where they could improve the presentation or content of their work. Tutors provide excellent feedback in relation to apprentices' spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, they provide useful explanations of the different ways in which apostrophes are used. Apprentices quickly improve the quality of their work as a result.

Tutors provide very effective support and excellent resources for all apprentices to enable them to develop their English, mathematical and digital skills. As a result, apprentices make good progress in developing these skills. For example, apprentices learn how to create digital tables to show the signs and symptoms of common childhood illnesses. They develop their mathematical skills by calculating the percentage of pupil premium boys and girls in a class and the probability of selecting a pupil premium pupil when drawing names from a hat.

Apprentices greatly increase their confidence as a result of their training. For example, their communication skills improve so that they are better able to speak to people on the phone or have conversations with visitors and senior managers at work.

Tutors communicate well with employers to ensure that apprentices undertake work tasks that enable them to meet the criteria for their apprenticeship qualifications. Tutors and employers also encourage apprentices to make the most of further training opportunities, such as in Makaton, that go beyond the requirements of their apprenticeships.

Managers and tutors are committed to improving the quality of the training that they provide to apprentices. They use observations carried out by external organisations to help them to identify and act on strengths and areas for development in teaching, learning and assessment. Observers provide useful reports with clear actions and targets to help tutors improve. Tutors follow up these actions meticulously and improve their practice as a result. Tutors often observe each other to share good practice. This ensures that apprentices get a high-quality experience whoever their tutor is. Tutors also evaluate their workshops and make improvements as a result of apprentices' feedback.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that the provision meets safeguarding requirements. Safeguarding has a very high profile throughout the trust. Managers have developed exemplary policies and procedures to underpin a culture of safety; staff and apprentices follow these well. All new staff undergo appropriate pre-employment checks.

Leaders and managers have strong links with external safeguarding partners, including the local authority and the police. They know how to make referrals to these partners, although they have not yet needed to do so in relation to apprenticeship provision.

All staff have completed appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Two designated safeguarding leads have completed additional in-depth training. Training is comprehensive, relevant to the local context, and frequently updated. Staff have recently completed training in relation to the risks of female genital mutilation, gang activity and child sexual exploitation. They are highly aware of local risks, including instances of far-right activity, and they are well equipped to support apprentices to stay safe from these risks.

The designated safeguarding leads maintain a log of safeguarding incidents and concerns within the trust. Staff and apprentices know how to report any concerns that they may have, and any such concerns are dealt with appropriately.

Managers undertake robust risk assessments in relation to safeguarding and health and safety risks at employers' premises. They also provide employers with useful

guidance about safeguarding their apprentices in the workplace. Managers have exemplary practices in place to monitor the safety and well-being of their apprentices at work; for example, apprentices are required to alert trust staff as well as their workplace if they are absent from work.

Tutors inform apprentices about safeguarding, including the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, at induction. This is reinforced and built upon throughout the programme. Well-documented discussions of safeguarding take place during all reviews. Discussion topics include online safety, safety at work, lone working, and safety on home visits. Consequently, apprentices have a highly developed understanding of safeguarding and know how to keep themselves and others safe.

Tutors plan and undertake well-informed discussions with apprentices about current affairs. This enhances apprentices' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and their understanding of British values. Tutors help apprentices plan appropriate ways to develop children's understanding of British values through, for example, activities about children's rights and discussions about ground rules. Tutors further enhance apprentices' understanding of active citizenship and life in modern Britain through well-designed workshops that cover themes such as communication, personal development, positive relationships and safeguarding.

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