

N-Gaged Training and Recruitment 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 three themes set out below.

N-Gaged Training and Recruitment Limited (N-Gaged) was formed in 2008 and is based in Bristol. Since then, the company has specialised in providing adult learning, primarily in the logistics sector. It has also been a subcontractor for a small number of apprenticeships. N-Gaged was awarded a direct contract in March 2017, and in October 2017, recruited its first apprentices under the new levy funding arrangements. Apprentices are based mostly in the south west, but there are also apprentices in other parts of England. Apprentices who are not based locally attend several residential training sessions in Bristol during their apprenticeship. N-Gaged continues to specialise in logistics but also has apprentices in the care sector. The company currently works with nine large employers.

There are currently 101 apprentices enrolled at N-Gaged under its prime contract, all of whom are funded under the levy. Almost all these apprentices are on new standards apprenticeships. The exception is the small number of apprentices who are studying business administration at level 2, for which there is no standard. Three quarters of apprentices are aged over 25 and a small number are under 18. Over half of the apprentices are on large goods vehicle or supply and warehousing apprenticeships. A fifth of apprentices are on care-related apprenticeships. The remainder are on business administration, customer service, hospitality or management apprenticeships. All of these apprentices work for employers within the logistics or care sectors. The large majority of apprentices are studying at level 2.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Directors have a clear strategy to support the logistics and care sectors through apprenticeships. They work closely with a small number of large employers to provide bespoke apprenticeships that meet these employers' needs well. For example, they provide a highly specialised traffic operations apprenticeship for national and international haulage companies. N-Gaged staff also ensure that apprentices gain additional qualifications as part of their training, such as forklift-truck driving and management diplomas, which widen their future employment options.

Staff work very effectively with employers to provide apprentices with a planned and individual programme of learning. These programmes include appropriate off-the-job training in the centre in Bristol, one-to-one time with assessors, online training and training provided by the employers. Apprentices gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their training. For example, drivers learn about the different type of goods they transport and methods of loading and unloading them. Most apprentices receive the appropriate amount of off-the-job training, and assessors monitor this closely. Directors are aware of individual apprentices who need more time for their off-the-job training and they are in discussion with apprentices' employers to secure this.

Most apprentices have a good understanding of British values and their importance in modern society. This is because staff provide them with relevant information. However, assessors do not provide sufficient information about radicalisation and extremism, so apprentices' understanding of these topics is limited.

N-Gaged directors appointed a specialist functional skills tutor to support the development of apprentices' English, mathematical and digital skills effectively. Most apprentices who have taken their functional skills qualifications this year have passed. Apprentices and employers recognise and identify improvements in communication skills, such as talking to clients and customers and sending professionally worded emails. Apprentices interviewed described gaining confidence in using mathematical knowledge and skills they previously found difficult, such as fractions. However, tutors and assessors do not develop further the English and mathematical skills of apprentices who have already achieved the required qualifications.

Staff work closely with employers to ensure that either new or existing employees are recruited to an appropriate apprenticeship. Staff provide effective guidance to help apprentices know how to progress in their careers. Apprentices and employers are clear about the requirements of the apprenticeship and the content of the new standards. They understand the concept of end-point assessment. However, neither apprentices nor employers are clear on what this may involve or when it will occur because N-Gaged staff have not yet informed them.

N-Gaged staff have not informed apprentices about the different grades they can attain in their end-point assessment. Only three apprentices are currently making progress towards grades higher than a pass. Assessors do not set more capable apprentices work to help them achieve higher grades. Directors accept too readily assessors' lower aspirations for their apprentices.

What progress have leaders and managers made Reasonable progress

in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?

Employers interviewed are clear about how their apprentices gain in knowledge, skills and confidence because of their apprenticeships. Employers are positive about the progress that their apprentices make due to their training. For example, apprentices in care settings use care plans appropriately to improve the welfare of their clients and they contribute more effectively to team meetings. Apprentices who work in traffic operations in large haulage companies develop a greater awareness of how the business works and the impact of national and international driving laws on drivers' hours. All employers interviewed expect apprentices to join their workforce at the end of the apprenticeship.

Directors have appointed staff with expertise in logistics and care, and they train them to teach or assess effectively. Most employers and apprentices speak highly of the knowledge and support that assessors provide. N-Gaged staff and directors respond quickly to any issues or queries that employers or apprentices raise and resolve these effectively.

N-Gaged staff use a range of resources to help apprentices gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices value the online system, which allows them to upload written work and receive new learning resources. Assessors ensure that apprentices without access to computers are not disadvantaged and provide them with the learning resources they need. Apprentices enjoy their learning and are particularly positive about the training they receive at the Bristol centre. Assessors meet regularly with apprentices and employers to evaluate the progress of each apprentice. Consequently, apprentices and employers know what has been completed and what apprentices still need to learn. However, assessors do not set apprentices targets specifically to improve their knowledge, skills or behaviours.

Directors' recent recruitment of new staff is increasing capacity both in training and for quality assurance purposes. The few apprentices who have fallen behind because of a shortage of assessors are now being helped to make improved progress. Assessors monitor the progress of their apprentices effectively. Directors have recently improved their overview of apprentices' progress, and as a result, are aware of the few apprentices who are at risk of not being ready for their end-point assessment.

Directors know most of the strengths and weaknesses due to frequent, informal discussions with their small team of staff and managers, and through regular board meetings. However, they do not evaluate systematically the quality of training or monitor regularly actions to make improvements. Action plans presented to the inspection team were lacking in detail. Apprentices' and employers' views are collected, but they are not analysed to provide directors with useful information about the quality and relevance of the apprenticeship provision.

Managers observe the teaching and assessments of tutors and assessors annually. However, they do not use their findings to develop useful staff training or share any good practice observed. Directors support the wider development of staff well through a range of continuing professional development, including teaching and assessor qualifications, and keeping up to date with new information. However, directors do not evaluate the impact of such staff development activities on the quality of training. A new quality director was appointed in March and is developing more systematic approaches to monitoring and improving the quality of training and safeguarding. These have not yet had any impact.

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 developed safeguarding policies, but these lack clear procedures for staff to follow. These policies omit important arrangements such as keeping apprentices safe online and arrangements for the few apprentices aged under 18 when they attend residential training. As a result, no such arrangements exist. Inspectors did not identify any apprentices at imminent risk.

Directors failed to ensure that the designated safeguarding lead completed appropriate training for the role. The newly appointed quality director completed this training last month. During this monitoring visit, the managing director agreed that the quality director would take on the role as safeguarding lead with immediate effect. Directors have not established relationships with external agencies to support any apprentices who may be at risk, including those in regions other than the south west.

N-Gaged staff have received online training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and most know to whom they should report any concerns. At the time of this visit, no apprentices had been referred as a result of safeguarding concerns. Directors have put appropriate procedures and mandatory checks in place for the safe recruitment of new staff.

Directors have developed a basic 'Prevent' duty action plan. This does not take into account specific risks to apprentices dependent on their location and job role.

Most apprentices interviewed have a basic awareness of safeguarding and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. They know how to report any concerns. However, they are unable to link radicalisation and extremism to British values. Assessors do not discuss radicalisation and extremism with apprentices sufficiently to deepen their knowledge and increase understanding. Directors very recently compiled a safeguarding action plan that includes most of the issues identified by inspectors. This has not yet had any impact.

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