

# KnowledgeBrief Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1278615

**Name of lead inspector:** Jane Hughes HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 48 Warwick Street  
London  
W1B 5AW



# 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.

KnowledgeBrief Limited (KnowledgeBrief) is a commercial training company that was established in 2005. It specialises in leadership and management programmes. KnowledgeBrief gained a contract to provide apprenticeship training in May 2017. The company is based in central London, but works with levy-paying employers nationally. This is the first time KnowledgeBrief has been involved with apprenticeship training.

Currently, 180 apprentices are on apprenticeship programmes. The vast majority of them started their programmes in January 2018. Apprentices are on operations and departmental manager standards at level 5 and team-leading standards at level 3. All apprentices are over the age of 18 years.

## Themes

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

### Reasonable progress

The directors and managers at KnowledgeBrief have a clear vision and strategy to meet the business needs of the employers with whom they work. These relate specifically to developing innovative leadership and management knowledge, skills and behaviours in apprentices. Directors aspire to be an outstanding provider of leadership and management training and have successfully adapted their commercial training offer to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standards. Directors work very closely with employers to build strong relationships and to design programmes that reflect the values of the businesses they work with. Employers value this approach. They are very aware of how the effective development of apprentices can benefit their business.

Directors have structured the training team appropriately and recruited well-qualified learning advisers to support apprentices. For example, learning advisers have degrees in business management, research and psychology, and experience of teaching and mentoring. They are working towards higher level management qualifications to keep their knowledge up to date. Learning advisers collaborate effectively to share good practice. However, there are no specialist learning advisers to identify and support apprentices who may need additional specialist help.

Directors and managers monitor apprentices' progress effectively. They also monitor the performance of staff. Lines of accountability are clear. Performance management meetings with learning advisers are regular. Although directors plan to introduce external scrutiny, there is currently no process in place to support and challenge the directors and senior leaders.

Managers ensure that apprentices receive the required off-the-job training. Apprentices take part in a variety of off-the-job learning activities, such as 'innovation days', online 'topics of the day', continuing professional development projects and one-to-one coaching. Managers check regularly that apprentices participate in these activities and intervene quickly when they do not. A small minority of employers do not give apprentices sufficient time for off-the-job training. When this is brought to managers' attention, they follow it up rapidly. They inform employers accurately about the required off-the-job training time during apprentices' working hours.

Directors and staff work effectively with employers to recruit apprentices onto the appropriate programme. They provide them with good initial information, advice and guidance. The vast majority of apprentices are on the correct course at the appropriate level.

Many apprentices are very experienced in their occupational area, such as in finance, science and plant operations. They have either been promoted into managerial or team-leading positions or aspire to be leaders and managers in the future. Most do not have the required knowledge, skills and behaviours to be innovative managers or team leaders. Staff carry out a detailed review of apprentices' prior knowledge, skills and experiences to ensure that the programmes meet their needs and the needs of their employers.

Although most apprentices have good skills in English and mathematics, directors have not focused enough on the development of skills in these subjects for the few apprentices who need it. Learning advisers work closely with many apprentices to develop their oral skills and writing competencies. For example, they train them to use the correct management vocabulary when speaking and writing. They also support apprentices to complete mathematical calculations within finance and budgeting units. However, not all apprentices receive this training. Directors do not evaluate the impact of learning advisers' support or the effectiveness of the training for those who are working towards functional skills examinations in English and mathematics.

## **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**

The majority of apprentices who start their apprenticeship remain on the programme. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to be effective and innovative team leaders and managers. For example, apprentices develop the techniques that enable them to set more measurable targets for their teams. They also deepen successfully their understanding of the different styles of leadership and management, for example 'supportive, directive and adaptive', and reflect on and change their own styles when necessary.

Apprentices are highly motivated. They enjoy their learning and development and aspire to be successful team leaders and managers. Apprentices particularly like the 'innovation' training days, which they find interactive and challenging. On these days, apprentices learn how to use various techniques to help them plan activities at work. As a result, they become more confident and better informed team leaders and managers.

Apprentices make very good use of a suite of professional and interactive online resources. The resources are based on up-to-date research and information from journals. Apprentices, through using online resources, have a good understanding of topics such as being a smarter leader and manager, using a balanced scorecard, and learning to learn.

Staff plan the apprenticeship programmes skilfully, taking careful account of apprentices' job roles, employment circumstances and entitlement to off-the-job training. Apprentices have very frequent contact with their learning advisers, who set realistic short-term targets and give them clear information on the progress they make.

Learning advisers check and assess apprentices' work regularly. They give apprentices helpful and detailed feedback on their completed assignments. Those apprentices who are returning to learning after some time away from it appreciate the good practical help and guidance they receive from the learning advisers. Apprentices know that this helps them to meet the requirements of their programme.

Directors and staff do not ensure that apprentices have sufficient information about end-point assessments. Staff do not inform apprentices early enough in their programme how they can achieve higher grades. Staff have been too slow to prepare apprentices for mock end-point assessments.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding**      **Reasonable progress**

## **arrangements are in place?**

Directors have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. Managers and staff have a good knowledge of their responsibilities and duties and how to identify and report any concerns they have.

The designated safeguarding officer and the deputy designated safeguarding officer have completed recent and relevant training at the correct level. They have implemented suitable reporting procedures and established contact with the relevant local authorities. The effectiveness of these procedures is untested as there have not been any safeguarding incidents.

Before staff are appointed, directors make sure that they are safe to work with apprentices. All staff have received relevant 'Prevent' duty training and training on how to safeguard apprentices. A carefully conceived 'Prevent' duty action plan outlines key operational tasks for full implementation by September 2018. These include developing training resources for staff and apprentices, better signposting of apprentices to the designated safeguarding officer and monitoring of apprentices' online activities.

Apprentices feel safe at work and on their training days. They have a good understanding of whom to speak to if they have any concerns. Apprentices receive safeguarding information at the start of their programme, but they do not receive any ongoing updates.

Directors and staff do not give apprentices sufficient information about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, apprentices do not understand why these issues are relevant to them, their work colleagues and immediate friends and family. Directors realise that they have been too slow to provide this information to apprentices.

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