

Estio 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 three themes set out below.

Estio Training Limited (Estio) was formed in 2014. The company is a privately owned, independent training provider. The company's head office is in Leeds, with apprentices studying throughout England. Estio works mainly with a range of large companies, National Health Service trusts and local authorities to offer standards-based apprenticeships in information technology (IT)-related subjects and project management. In May 2017, Estio became a levy-funded provider for apprenticeships and in January 2018 the company secured further funding for non-levy apprenticeships. Prior to this, Estio operated as a subcontractor. On this inspection, only the directly funded provision was inspected.

Estio has 592 apprentices on programmes; 26 apprentices are studying at intermediate level, 278 are studying at advanced level and 288 are studying at higher levels. Most apprentices are studying standards-based programmes in IT-related subjects. Thirty-one apprentices are studying IT-related frameworks and 103 apprentices are studying standards-based advanced apprenticeships in team leading or higher-level apprenticeships in project management.

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 a strategy that is carefully devised and clear. They aspire to become a national market leader of IT-related apprenticeships. As members of the Trailblazer development group, leaders have been early adopters of standards-based apprenticeships. They work closely with end-point assessment (EPA) organisations and employers to ensure that they design the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of apprentices and their employers.

Leaders ensure that they recruit highly qualified staff with good industrial experience. Most staff have high-level qualifications in IT-related subjects. Around half of the training team hold teaching qualifications. Leaders provide specific support to staff who need additional qualifications, such as diplomas in coaching techniques and teaching qualifications. Leaders make significant investments in

facilities at Estio's premises to support apprentices' off-the-job training. They have plans to expand the facilities further.

Leaders ensure that their programmes meet the apprenticeship requirements. For example, they ensure that apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training. All apprentices take part in frequent off-the-job training at the provider's training centres. They undertake a range of activities that enhance their knowledge, skills and behaviours including additional industry-based qualifications. Recently, apprentices have begun to record their off-the-job training and the training provided by their employers in their individual learning plans. However, staff do not monitor the individual learning plans sufficiently to ensure that apprentices' recording is accurate.

Leaders forge productive relationships with employers. They work successfully with employers to recruit apprentices into new roles and to plan apprentices' learning carefully. Leaders recognise the need to be flexible with their delivery plans. They work effectively with employers to agree the most appropriate approach for their apprentices so that they develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly.

Employers have an integral role in progress reviews and they monitor their apprentices' performance closely. They support the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours well. Almost all employers have a good understanding of their role in providing high-quality off-the-job training for apprentices. Leaders are working with those employers who do not yet understand their role. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.

Leaders and managers have access to a wide range of information about their apprentices, and staff know apprentices very well. However, managers' use of data does not always enable them to identify when apprentices are making slower than expected progress. As a result, in a few cases managers have been too slow to introduce interventions that support apprentices to make 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? Reasonable progress

Apprentices' starting points are defined clearly through skills scans and base-line assessments that are detailed and relevant to the specific programme that they are starting. Skills coaches use the results effectively to ensure that apprentices start the programme at the most appropriate point. Skills coaches plan apprentices' learning programmes carefully and select the most appropriate learning tasks for them to complete.

Prospective apprentices benefit from effective careers information, advice and guidance before applying for and starting their apprenticeship. Staff work effectively with employers to ensure that apprentices gain relevant new knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours during their training. However, apprentices do not benefit from effective careers information, advice and guidance towards the end of their apprenticeship about their next steps.

Apprentices speak confidently about the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they gain during their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices on digital-media marketing apprenticeships gain effective web-development and coding skills that help them to fulfil their job roles successfully.

Leaders and managers track apprentices that are close to the EPA gateway carefully. Staff have a good understanding of the EPA process and ensure that apprentices are thoroughly prepared to enter the EPA gateway. For example, apprentices benefit from ongoing support for their face-to-face interview and many receive intensive one-to-one support in preparation for their final assessments.

Leaders and managers have recently identified the improvements that they need to prioritise to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment. They have implemented a new observation process that focuses on the craft of teaching and how well apprentices are progressing. However, too many tutors and skills coaches do not ensure that apprentices understand fully the taught concepts before moving on. A minority of tutors and skills coaches do not have sufficient teaching or coaching skills to help apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

Too few tutors and skills coaches help apprentices to improve their English and mathematical knowledge and skills. A few apprentices develop their mathematical knowledge and skills successfully through their job role. For example, project-management apprentices develop their understanding of budgeting when at work. A small number of skills coaches provide helpful feedback to apprentices to help them develop their written work. However, this does not happen consistently well. As a result, not enough apprentices develop their English and mathematical knowledge and skills beyond the minimum apprenticeship requirements.

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

Leaders have introduced effective systems and processes to ensure that apprentices are safe.

Estio has a team of four designated safeguarding officers (DSOs). They are trained appropriately. They maintain detailed records of any safeguarding concerns and make appropriate referrals. DSOs are based in Leeds and Manchester. They are easy to contact by telephone and through a new dedicated safeguarding email address.

There is no DSO based in the London training centre. Staff in the London centre provide good support to apprentices that need help and DSOs visit the centre on a weekly basis.

Leaders keep suitable records of the checks that they complete before someone starts to work for them in a training or coaching capacity, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks. All members of staff have completed appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe when working and in their everyday lives. They demonstrate safe working practices on the job and in the training centres. They keep themselves safe online and know what to do should they need help or support. They have a general awareness of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism but their knowledge of threats close to where they live and work is underdeveloped.

Leaders have a 'Prevent' risk assessment and an action plan that comply with the statutory obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. However, the risk assessment and action plan do not identify the local threats of radicalisation and extremism sufficiently. Leaders have the contact details for the local authority 'Prevent' coordinators in the areas in which they have training centres, but they have not yet formed productive relationships with them.

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