

Care Training Solutions Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 58567
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Inspection dates: 8–9 August 2018
Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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.

Care Training Solutions Ltd (CTS) was purchased by its current owner and managing director in 2011. Since then, it has been a subcontractor to two council services and a local college. It became registered to receive public funding for the delivery of training in its own right in May 2017. The first cohort of levy-funded apprentices was enrolled three months later. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 13 apprentices on frameworks and three on the new apprenticeship standards. They were undertaking apprenticeships in health and social care in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire areas. Twelve of the apprentices were working towards a qualification at level 3 and three at level 2. One apprentice was following a framework qualification at level 5.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders' management of the programme is not effective enough. They do not hold a sufficiently robust view of the performance of the programme as a whole. Leaders and managers discuss individual apprentices' performance frequently. They identify the apprentices who are progressing slowly but they do not deal with this sufficiently by establishing challenging actions designed to accelerate apprentices' progress.

Leaders have not implemented any governance arrangements. Consequently, they do not receive the necessary constructive challenge with regard to how aspects of the programme have been set up. They are not held to account for delivering high-quality training.

CTS leaders have experience of working in the care sector. They have built up good relationships with employers, supporting them, for example, to carry out training needs analyses to identify what is required to raise the skills of their workforce. The provider recruits learners from these employers and has secured the sustainability of the programme for the next academic year.

Leaders focus excessively on the operational management related to the programme and do not deploy their strategic role sufficiently well.

Leaders and managers have ensured that all the necessary components of the apprenticeships are in place, but several aspects of the programmes are not set up effectively to ensure that the provider delivers a successful apprenticeship. For example, all apprentices, regardless of their apprenticeship-programme level, prior achievements and abilities, are scheduled to complete the programme in one year and one week. Currently, the vast majority of the apprentices due to complete next month are making slow progress with regard to achieving their apprenticeship in the planned twelve months.

Apprentices do not benefit from impartial information, advice and guidance at the start of their programme. Too many apprentices hold career discussions with their managers but are then placed on the level of qualification that their manager decides upon, rather than focusing on choosing the level that best meets the apprentices' needs and abilities. Leaders do not challenge this routinely or provide additional information for the apprentices to make informed decisions.

Leaders and managers make clear to employers the number of hours that apprentices are entitled to for their off-the-job training in working hours. Assessors keep accurate records detailing when apprentices undertake this training. Apprentices know the requirements of the qualification and have sufficient time to complete their course work and assignments outside of work time.

The vast majority of staff are well qualified and have relevant continuing professional development, both academically and within their vocational area. The internal quality-assurance processes meet compliance requirements.

Leaders and managers have not set up performance monitoring targets to plan and monitor outcomes, in particular during the first year of delivery of their own contract. For example, they have not analysed the reasons for apprentices' withdrawals so that any relevant actions are taken to ensure that all apprentices remain on their courses. As a result, they have been unable to make sure that all apprentices receive effective support to complete their qualification.

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

Apprentices are not making the expected progress. Too many apprentices are behind on every element of their apprenticeship. Assessors do not direct and challenge apprentices sufficiently to improve their knowledge and skills quickly. Therefore, apprentices are making slow progress towards completing their qualifications within the one-year timeframe set by the provider. Leaders and managers do not challenge assessors appropriately to ensure that apprentices complete by their planned end date.

Leaders and managers have not agreed a strategy to ensure that those apprentices who have already achieved the required level of qualification in English and mathematics continue to develop their knowledge and skills further in these subjects during their apprenticeship.

Assessors do not carry out effective initial assessment of the apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills. They do not provide the learning and support required for apprentices to gain knowledge and skills in these areas quickly. This is the case particularly for those apprentices who have already gained the English and mathematics skills required for their apprenticeship.

Employers are not sufficiently involved in the apprenticeship programme. For example, they do not receive enough information on the apprentices' progress from the assessors. Employers do not have an adequate input into the apprentices' progress reviews and, therefore, cannot contribute to and support their apprentices' development of knowledge and skills relevant to their qualification in a timely manner.

Assessors receive useful feedback on their assessment performance. However, the observation of teaching and learning that leaders and managers undertake does not guide staff well on how to improve their teaching practices.

Assessors use the apprentices' previous vocational experience to plan effective learning sessions and provide apprentices with new knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours. Apprentices know how to use their new knowledge to develop their skills within the workplace.

Apprentices with additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, are well supported by their assessors. Apprentices benefit from their assessors' suggestions and guidance on other ways of collecting evidence that suit their needs.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Insufficient progress

Leaders have not placed sufficient emphasis on ensuring that the safeguarding arrangements to protect apprentices are effective. They have not reviewed the safeguarding measures put in place to satisfy themselves that they meet the government's requirements. Leaders' knowledge and understanding of what constitutes effective safeguarding arrangements as an independent training provider are insufficient.

The provider's safeguarding policy is geared towards supporting apprentices in protecting the service users they care for instead of protecting the apprentices. The policy simply repeats the contents of the qualification. For example, the provider has not set up a whistleblowing policy to enable apprentices to report safely any safeguarding issues in their place of work.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that the role of the designated safeguarding officer is effective and meets the government's requirements. For example, the provider has not obtained a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check for the designated safeguarding officer. The role has not been explained to apprentices and employers as their main point of contact in the case of any safeguarding and well-being concerns about learners. Furthermore, there is insufficient cover for the role throughout the week and during holiday periods. Apprentices do not know who to contact at CTS if they have a safeguarding concern.

The operations manager and all staff have received commensurate safeguarding training for the role they have, but so far only half of the assessors have undertaken e-safety training. The provider has obtained the appropriate DBS checks for the managing director and all teaching staff.

Staff have received training on the 'Prevent' duty. However, leaders recognise that this is only basic and that further work is needed to support them with helping apprentices to understand the relevance of these topics to their workplace.

Apprentices lack understanding of key matters, such as how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism and on equality and diversity. At progress reviews, assessors ask set questions on these topics, but this approach is ineffective in reinforcing and expanding the apprentices' knowledge and understanding in these areas.

Leaders and managers had ensured that health and safety practices in the workplace are appropriate when recruiting learners and developing relationships with employers.

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