

Darwin Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Richard Deane HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Heritage House
51, Racecourse Crescent
Shrewsbury
SY2 5BW



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.

Darwin Training Limited started training in 2013. Since then it has been a subcontractor to a college and provided non-funded accredited courses in the health and social care sector. The provider registered to receive public funding for the first time in May 2017. The first levy-funded apprentices enrolled three months later. At the time of the inspection, there were 43 apprentices, all funded through the levy and working towards apprenticeships at levels 2, 3 and 5 in the health and childcare sectors. Most apprentices undertake frameworks, but five apprentices follow standards-based apprenticeships. The provider does not subcontract any provision.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear focus and commitment to help close the regional skills gap in health professions and provide high-quality apprenticeships for the health, social care and childcare sectors. They have been appropriately cautious in their expansion plans, so that they can concentrate on managing resources and staff to deliver the high standard of training their local employers expect. Leaders have built strong employer partnerships to help employers take advantage of the apprenticeship levy and to design a programme that meets employers' individual needs. Employers value highly the expertise that leaders bring to the partnership and the support and service that they receive.

Leaders have made a significant investment in a well-designed online portfolio and progress-monitoring system, which they use to manage their business information. Managers, staff and employers use well the accurate and timely information to monitor apprentices' progress and identify quickly those who fall behind in their work. Leaders contact employers swiftly to agree appropriate actions for the small minority of apprentices who cause concern. However, leaders have been too slow to improve apprentices' attendance at English and mathematics functional skills sessions.

Leaders have successfully designed the curriculum to match apprentices' job roles, including the requirements for on- and off-the-job training. When appropriate, they

provide additional coaching and training to prepare apprentices for the end-point assessment. Employers make a commitment to provide apprentices with time to undertake their studies at work. However, because of changes to work shift patterns and staffing shortages, too many apprentices do not receive their full entitlement and so they complete their studies in their own time.

Although they are not involved in the initial recruitment of apprentices, leaders agree the specific requirements of the apprenticeship with their employers. Apprenticeship candidates complete a highly detailed and rigorous induction, which includes a wide range of role-specific training. This includes strategies to protect themselves when working in challenging environments and specific communication techniques to avoid escalating a potentially dangerous situation. Those candidates progressing to the apprenticeship receive full information about their role and the expectations of the course. Apprentices are knowledgeable about the wide variety of career opportunities that match their future ambitions, including roles in nursing, mental health practice, midwifery, teaching and social work.

Leaders rightly accept that effective governance is essential to challenge their current performance and their growth plans. Leaders have approached experts from the health and social care sector to enhance their governance arrangements, but have not recruited new governors.

A high proportion of apprentices remain on their programme. The large majority make good progress.

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**

Assessors are well qualified and have relevant expertise within the sector. They have high expectations of each other and for apprentices to develop the knowledge and skills that their employers demand. Assessors share their practice and seek ways to improve apprentices' skills and knowledge. Apprentices benefit from the expertise of their assessors. Apprentices receive sufficient challenge to deepen their knowledge relevant to their job roles. This enables apprentices to improve their skills in the workplace. For example, a level 3 apprentice working with young people used theories on 'operant conditioning' training to manage their behavioural issues.

Apprentices have a good understanding of their vocational qualification. They demonstrate how learning develops their confidence, competence and the skills relevant to their job roles. A minority of apprentices describe how their course has helped them secure promotion and additional responsibilities at work. For example, a level 2 apprentice lacked confidence in dealing with the more complex activities in a care home. Since starting the programme, this apprentice undertakes additional activities such as organising events. The employer has recognised this improvement

and gives additional responsibilities to the apprentice when other staff are on annual leave.

Assessors use comprehensive assessment strategies, including a gap analysis of apprentices' skills when they start their programme, to identify their abilities accurately. They use this information to set appropriate targets, which apprentices find useful in helping them to complete the required units of their vocational programme. A minority of apprentices receive encouragement to extend their learning and choose additional units relevant to their job roles. For example, a level 3 apprentice working in adult care chose to widen her knowledge of dementia and nutrition in order to provide better care and support to clients.

Managers and assessors monitor closely apprentices' progress towards their main qualification. Using the online portfolio system, assessors record in detail apprentices' progress and provide them with helpful feedback that enables them to improve their work. Most apprentices access their online portfolio frequently to check their progress and to keep on track with their studies. Assessors have adapted teaching strategies to ensure that those apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships will be ready for their end-point assessment. Apprentices receive additional tests and rehearsals for their professional discussion, so that they can prepare well for their final assessment. A small minority of apprentices do not make their expected levels of progress, particularly on functional skills English and mathematics courses. Managers are rightly aware of the need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders have implemented thorough quality assurance procedures which include the observation of staff. They hold regular internal verification and standardisation sessions and provide staff with useful training and support to improve their assessment practices. Leaders have devised a quality improvement plan with a set of appropriate actions to raise standards. However, they have not summarised and assessed fully the effectiveness of these actions. Leaders do not survey apprentices' views sufficiently so that they can improve the quality of provision.

Assessors do not make appropriate provision to extend skills in English and mathematics for those apprentices who are exempt from functional skills.

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

Senior leaders have made safeguarding a high priority for staff and apprentices. They have implemented comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures and they review them routinely in team and management meetings. The three designated safeguarding officers receive appropriate training. The lead officer is a member of several local safeguarding boards. As a result, staff receive up-to-date and relevant training and information on safeguarding practices. Because of these

links, a few apprentices have attended Local Safeguarding Children Board meetings as observers, to extend their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding.

Staff have a strong understanding of safeguarding, their responsibility to safeguard their apprentices and the client groups with which they work. Leaders monitor safeguarding concerns routinely and thoroughly. They ensure that apprentices receive the appropriate training to protect themselves from potential harm in the settings in which they operate. Apprentices also benefit from a wide range of additional courses, such as dealing with aggressive behaviour, restraint training and drug and alcohol misuse. Apprentices study safeguarding as part of their course. They demonstrate a very comprehensive knowledge of how to keep themselves safe and of the particular risks and vulnerabilities that their clients may experience.

Leaders have prioritised comprehensive training for their apprentices in the 'Prevent' duty and ensure that they have a working knowledge of this to protect themselves and their clients. For example, childcare apprentices receive additional support and guidance to work with children who are particularly at risk of radicalisation. All apprentices have a good understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation and know who to contact should they have any concerns. For example, one apprentice described in detail the signs of the radicalisation of children, including their change of behaviour and attitudes. This apprentice also explained the risks associated with access to online media.

Leaders have implemented safer recruitment practices. They ensure that all staff have enhanced disclosure checks and appropriate references before they work in the provider's settings.

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