

Develop Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Gerard McGrath, HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Derby Training Centre
Ascot Drive
Derby
DE24 8GW



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.

Develop Training Limited (DTL) is a technical training company that provides training to customers, which include multi-national organisations, small to medium enterprises and sole traders. DTL is a major supplier of technical training to the United Kingdom utilities market. It delivers gas, water and environment, health and safety, electrical, mechanical and buildings services, and corporate development training.

The majority of DTL's business is commercially generated through the delivery of the accreditations and qualifications required to work within the utilities sector. Government-funded training through a contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency accounts for a very small percentage of DTL's business. DTL also provides a wide range of learning programmes in the gas and water utilities industries. Currently DTL has 56 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships and nine apprentices on apprenticeship frameworks. Most apprentices are studying on courses in sewerage and drainage, engineering maintenance and team leading at level 3.

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 gas and water utilities sectors through the provision of apprenticeships. They work closely with a small number of employers to provide bespoke apprenticeships that meet these employers' requirements as well as those of the Institute for Apprenticeships. Directors and the team of lecturers and assessors are highly qualified and experienced in the technical aspects of gas and water supply management, engineering and distribution. Most lecturers and assessors worked in the industry for many years before taking up their role with DTL. Employers place a very high value on this expertise and the credibility that DTL's staff bring with them.

DTL's senior managers have developed good links with employers, who hold them in high regard, having provided training and consultancy services to the gas- and

water-supply industries for many years. Managers are careful to ensure that employers and apprentices fulfil the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. They work collaboratively with employers to ensure that apprentices carry out challenging project work that develops new and relevant vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours that contribute to the employers' business.

Directors work closely with employers to ensure that either new or existing employees enrol on an appropriate apprenticeship. They provide effective information, advice and guidance to help apprentices know how to progress in their careers. Recruitment procedures are appropriately rigorous. Directors make sure that applicants have the qualifications and attributes that they need to succeed on the apprenticeship programmes.

The very large majority of apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training to enable them to progress and succeed. A few employers struggle to provide sufficient time during the working week to enable apprentices to study while on the job. This usually occurs during periods when employers require all employees, including apprentices, to attend to urgent situations related to the regional gas networks or to water supply or treatment. Assessors have managed effectively the impact of these busy periods on apprentices' progress.

Managers track the progress of apprentices effectively. They have a good understanding of apprentices' progress and intervene promptly to ensure that those who fall behind catch up quickly. As a result of this well-planned support, all apprentices have remained on their programme and are making at least the progress expected of them.

Managers prepare apprentices appropriately for the end-point assessment. Consequently, apprentices have an adequate understanding of how and when they will be assessed prior to completing their programme.

Apprentices recruited to the first standards-based apprenticeship programme complained that the early off-the-job training sessions covered very generic topics and that lecturers provided little that was directly relevant to their work specialisms. Apprentices also received little guidance about the content of the course or the commitment required to succeed. DTL's managers have now resolved these problems and apprentices are much clearer about the requirements of the apprenticeship. Training sessions now focus clearly on the technical knowledge and skills that apprentices need to develop in their job role.

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

DTL's team of specialist lecturers and assessors are well qualified and experienced. They plan thoroughly and organise appropriately off-the-job training sessions. They ensure that the sessions cover the specialist knowledge, skills and behaviours required to carry out effectively the wide range of roles required in the gas and water distribution and water treatment industries. Leaders and managers provide training centres that have the technical and specialist resources essential to help apprentices learn quickly.

Lecturers and assessors are enthusiastic about their subject and communicate this effectively during group and individual learning sessions. They provide suitably clear guidance for end-point assessment for those on standards-based apprenticeships. As a result, apprentices are motivated, engaged and keen to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

DTL's managers ensure that all apprentices receive sufficient high-quality off-the-job training that meets the apprenticeship standards. Depending on the specific apprenticeship they are following, apprentices attend blocks of off-the-job training at one of DTL's well-equipped training centres or they receive good-quality individual training in the workplace from one of DTL's assessors.

Employers are committed to ensuring that all aspects of the standards-based apprenticeships are delivered. Most provide a wide range of relevant in-house development programmes and on-the-job training that support apprentices' progress. However, managers acknowledge the need to coordinate off-the-job training better in order to reinforce and support further apprentices' on-the-job learning.

Most apprentices are new to the job role in which they have chosen to specialise, although a few have previously worked in a similar technical role. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours because of their training. Apprentices develop excellent attitudes and behaviours that are very relevant to the industry in which they work. For example, several apprentices, recently promoted to a supervisory role, now use this learning to carry out performance-management tasks using effective interpersonal skills.

Lecturers and assessors work collaboratively to ensure that apprentices make good progress from their starting point and achieve their planned targets. They use questioning effectively to deepen and extend apprentices' knowledge and understanding. They are highly effective in supporting apprentices to identify work-related projects which demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the

standards require. Lecturers set specific, achievable and time-limited targets for apprentices. Most apprentices achieve these targets by the planned end date.

Lecturers and assessors use a good 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. Apprentices enjoy their learning and are particularly positive about the group training they receive at DTL's training centres. Assessors meet regularly with apprentices and employers to evaluate the progress of each apprentice. Consequently, apprentices know what they have achieved and what they still need to learn.

Initial assessment arrangements are good. Apprentices receive a suitable diagnostic assessment of their skills in English and mathematics, as well as of any additional learning needs, and staff make appropriate arrangements to support apprentices where necessary.

Senior leaders and managers use suitable quality-assurance arrangements to monitor and improve standards. Taught sessions are subject to regular and frequent quality evaluation using direct observation. Lecturers and assessors receive action points after observations, which results in the maintenance and further improvement of standards of teaching and learning.

Most apprentices already have a good grade in GCSE English and mathematics and the few who do not follow an appropriate functional-skills programme in one or both subjects. The development of apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills is appropriate. Lecturers ensure that they integrate English and mathematics with the main qualification. A few apprentices on courses at level 3 that have a high mathematical content complain that they do not receive sufficient specialist support to help them with the advanced mathematics that they need to complete technical-engineering assignments. Managers have recently appointed a functional skills specialist to support these apprentices but it is too soon to assess the impact.

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

Apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety. Their understanding is reinforced during induction, in off-the-job training sessions and through 'toolkit talks' in the workplace. Their recall of the key aspects of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty is good and they know how to stay safe online and when using social media. They can identify the dangers of radicalisation and how to spot early indicators of extremist behaviour. Most apprentices can discuss confidently the range of security measures that employers have implemented to secure and protect sensitive water-treatment facilities and gas distribution networks from external threats.

Apprentices understand British values and can outline the ways that they model behaviours to reflect these values in the workplace. Most lecturers and assessors

make sure that they discuss relevant current affairs topics to broaden apprentices' understanding of such values during the programmes.

Directors have developed suitable safeguarding policies that have clear procedures for staff to follow. These policies cover important arrangements such as those related to keeping apprentices safe online and to reporting a concern. Directors ensured that the designated safeguarding lead received appropriate training for the role.

Directors have put appropriate procedures and mandatory checks in place for the safe recruitment of new staff. DTL staff have received basic training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and most know to whom they should report any concerns. No apprentice has been referred as a result of safeguarding concerns.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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