

System People Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

System People Limited (System People) was formed in 2003 as a recruitment agency. In 2013, it became a provider of apprenticeship training as a subcontractor to one college. In May 2017, System People gained registration to receive public funding to deliver training in its own right. System People currently provides training for 100 apprentices. Apprentices study at level 2 and the large majority are over 24 years of age. Two thirds of apprentices are on standards apprenticeships. Over one half of all apprentices are studying an apprenticeship in large goods vehicle (LGV) driver. The remaining apprentices are on apprenticeships in children and young people's workforce, supporting teaching and learning in schools, passenger transport driver, supply chain warehouse operative, construction civil engineering, and traffic office. Two thirds of apprentices are in Cumbria. The remaining apprentices are in London and the East Midlands. System People works with three subcontractors who provide training in functional skills and category C driving licence. The subcontractors train LGV apprentices who are located outside Cumbria. System People provides apprenticeships for 13 employers.

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, relevant to industry needs, to deliver apprenticeships in the logistics, childcare and education sectors. Leaders and managers use their previous experience of subcontracting for apprenticeships effectively. They ensure that the development and delivery of their new direct contract meet the apprenticeship requirements.

Directors and managers develop highly effective relationships with employers and key stakeholders in the transport, logistics and education sectors. They plan their apprenticeship offer to meet the needs of regional and national priorities. Leaders and managers develop the apprenticeship curriculum in collaboration with employers

to meet the individual needs of employers. They include extra training qualifications such as fork-lift truck driving and first responder at a trauma scene. Employers benefit from the value that apprentices add to their businesses owing to their improved levels of professionalism. For example, apprentices who take part in an outward-bound team-building day develop their skills in communication, teamwork and positivity.

Directors and managers recruit for apprenticeships with integrity. They ensure that the employers they work with are committed to all aspects of the apprenticeship programme. Where this is not the case, they do not work with that employer to deliver apprenticeships. Most apprentices who start their course remain on their programme. Leaders identified that apprentices who left their programme early were all employed by small- to medium-sized employers. They identified the reasons for this and acted swiftly and effectively to remedy the issues. As a result, all the apprentices who started after leaders and managers put the actions in place remain on their programmes. Apprentices on standards apprenticeships who are ready to undertake their end-point assessments are on track to do so. Apprentices are very positive about all aspects of their apprenticeship.

Directors and leaders plan effectively for growth. They have appointed an administrator and apprenticeship coordinator to meet the recent growth in the childcare and education sectors. Leaders have established sufficient training staff for future expansion. They have plans in place to recruit more administrative staff to support this growth.

Directors invest in resources to support the progress of their apprentices in using up-to-date technology in the workplace. For example, apprentices who study the LGV apprenticeship use the driver simulator as part of their initial assessment. They train for their category C and E driving licences in modern articulated lorries.

Leaders and managers work effectively with three subcontractors. Subcontractors provide category C driving licence and functional skills training to LGV apprentices. Leaders and subcontractors work closely together to ensure the quality of provision. For example, leaders and subcontractors identified an issue in the achievement of a cohort of apprentices. Managers put in place improvements to the training of one element of the category C driving licence. As a result of this, more apprentices achieved the qualification.

Directors know the detail of the progress that apprentices make against their qualifications. They do not have a clear enough oversight of the progress apprentices make from their starting points. The reports they receive do not clearly identify the proportions of apprentices who are on, above or below target.

Leaders' and managers' self-assessment requires further development to make it robust. Leaders and managers have put in place a quality improvement plan that includes areas for improvement. However, the plan does not focus enough on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the progress that apprentices are making. It does not include detailed and measurable targets.

Directors understand the strengths and weaknesses of System People. They work very closely together in ensuring that they maintain the quality of the provision.

Although they meet formally as a board every quarter, directors make many of their strategic decisions informally on a day-to-day basis. The reports that directors receive at board level do not focus enough on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and apprentices' progress. Directors have plans to increase the frequency of board meetings to take place monthly. They intend to recruit to the board a professional from the further education and skills sector.

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

Leaders and managers plan and manage apprentices' training successfully. They have established clear and effective arrangements for the delivery of off-the-job training. Apprentices develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills in System People training centres in Cumbria, and in training rooms in employers' workplaces in the other regions. Apprentices attend training in blocks throughout their apprenticeship. They have a mentor in their workplace who supports them to put into practice at work what they learn off the job.

All apprentices are either new recruits or existing employees in promoted job roles. Apprentices develop new, occupationally specific skills, knowledge and behaviours well. They apply these skills in the workplace to good effect. For example, childcare apprentices create workbooks for nursery children, which they use to communicate with parents and primary schools.

Apprentices attend functional skills English and mathematics lessons in week-long blocks. Trainers support apprentices who need extra help on a one-to-one basis. First-time functional skills pass rates at level 1 are high. Leaders and managers have recently enhanced the delivery model for English and mathematics to improve the skills of apprentices who must attempt level 2 functional skills examinations in English and mathematics as part of their apprenticeship. Apprentices' pass rates on these qualifications are currently low.

Leaders and managers recruit vocationally experienced, well-qualified trainers. Trainers are knowledgeable about their subject areas. They support apprentices to make progress on their programmes. Leaders and managers ensure that trainers keep up to date with their occupational skills through regular professional development.

Leaders, managers and trainers identify swiftly apprentices who are falling behind. They work with employers to put in place extra training and support sessions to help them to catch up.

Managers check apprentices' progress using a learner journey tracker. Leaders and managers devise the plan with the employer and coordinate on- and off-the-job training. Leaders and managers do not use the initial skills and knowledge assessments they carry out with apprentices at the start of their programme effectively. They do not use the information they gather to plan learning so that each

apprentice can reach their full potential. Managers set apprentices the same milestones to complete in the same timeframe for each apprenticeship.

Apprentices' progress reviews are regular. Leaders and managers do not ensure that target setting during reviews is robust. Trainers and reviewers do not communicate about the progress that apprentices are making before the review takes place. Consequently, during the review, reviewers do not sufficiently challenge apprentices about their vocational knowledge and skills. They do not set apprentices effective occupational targets to improve and progress at the level of which they are capable.

Leaders and managers have arrangements in place to check the quality of provision and of teaching, learning and assessment. They recognise that the process for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment is insufficiently robust. Observers focus too much on what the trainer does rather than the impact of teaching on the progress that apprentices make. Associated action plans do not focus enough on what the trainer needs to do so that apprentices reach their potential. Managers do not plan sufficient staff development activities to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress that learners make.

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

Safeguarding is effective. However, during the monitoring visit, inspectors identified some weaknesses in documentation. Leaders and managers rectified this swiftly.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), the two deputies and the managing director have appropriate up-to-date training. The DSL keeps abreast of updates and disseminates key information to staff and apprentices using 'hot topics'. Topics include mental health, transgender awareness, winter driving and cyber bullying. Apprentices receive induction training on safeguarding, including online safety, and radicalisation and extremism. They feel safe and know how to report concerns.

Staff receive training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Trainers and assessors reinforce equality and diversity, British values and safeguarding throughout apprentices' training. As a result, apprentices show a good understanding of how this relates to them personally and professionally.

The DSL has put in place effective arrangements to support and monitor apprentices identified as having safeguarding needs. Staff report concerns promptly. The DSL makes referrals, where necessary, to external agencies for further support.

Leaders and managers have recently implemented a clear policy to ensure the safer recruitment and selection of staff. They follow these practices effectively. Leaders have in place a single central register. All relevant staff, including those with subcontractors, have completed an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.

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