

Crosby Management Training Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1278609
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Inspection date(s): 21–22 November 2018
Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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 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.

Crosby Management Training Ltd (CMT) was founded 21 years ago. Since 2009, it has worked as a subcontractor from Walsall College and Dudley College of Technology. After securing its contract, managers started to deliver learning in May 2017. The company continues to offer apprenticeship training in butchery and food preparation on behalf of the above colleges, and so these apprentices were not in the scope of the visit. The company owns a national chain of butchers and a retail farm shop. Leaders and managers led on the development of six apprenticeship standards. During the monitoring visit, 219 apprentices were in learning attending programmes in human resources (HR), and learning and development at levels 3 and 5. Butchery and food preparation apprentices on levels 2 and 3 make up 21% of the provision. HR and learning and development apprentices account for 60% and 15% of the total provision, respectively. Eight full-time consultant trainers and a few associates deliver all learning directly.

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 clear rationale for their delivery of apprenticeships as a prime contractor. The rationale is based on the company's substantial experience of delivering learning to private companies, and on behalf of two large colleges in the West Midlands as a subcontractor. Leaders and managers have made significant investment in the company by employing high-calibre staff from industry and developing their own support infrastructure to provide high-quality learning. For example, the HR professionals have held very senior positions in national companies. Learning and development staff have worked in outstanding training providers. The lead tutor on the butchery programme is a champion of champions and is supported in his role by an associate who is the world champion butcher.

Building on this credibility with industry, leaders and managers have been able to grow their provision significantly in a very short period. They have provided consultant trainers with learning resources, such as a web-based learning platform, which they use very effectively to enhance apprentices' learning experiences. Staff are currently piloting a single dashboard to enable them to view apprentices' progress at a glance and record their evidence for their portfolios.

To improve support to help apprentices complete functional skills, leaders and managers have appointed a well-qualified teacher, who has begun to have a positive impact on apprentices who need functional skills to pass their qualifications. By establishing the pastoral support team of two staff, leaders and managers have recognised the pastoral and study support needs of apprentices. However, at present, the company does not identify apprentices who may have special educational needs such as dyslexia. This affects a handful of current apprentices.

Senior leaders have a clear strategy to become a specialist provider in HR, butchery and learning and development. They know the employment sectors well and recognise the need for qualified professionals. Senior managers are leaders in their field. They have led on the development of six apprenticeship standards in which they deliver learning. CMT was the first company in the country to deliver standards in butchery two years ago. These standards meet the needs of employers exceptionally well, as previously they delivered a National Vocational Qualification in meat and poultry skills, which was the only option available to them on frameworks.

Managers have strong links with employers, many of these developed over several years. Communications are very good. Leaders and managers have established a highly responsive set of apprenticeship standards that meet the needs of the employers' businesses extremely well. For example, an employer in the aviation field approached the company, and managers enabled it to provide a bespoke apprenticeship standard. Employers can readily identify how their apprentices have acquired new skills and are increasing the value they bring to their organisations.

Managers ensure that programmes meet the principles of apprenticeships. Along with the employers and apprentices, managers identify and record a minimum 20% off-the-job training that apprentices undertake to help them understand the theory behind their practical skills. The arrangements for end-point assessment are appropriately thorough. Senior leaders have strong relationships with the awarding organisations.

The recruitment of apprentices is thorough. Staff work very closely with employers to recruit only those apprentices who will benefit from learning and will add value to the employer's business. During the recruitment stage, staff ensure that they identify apprentices' starting points accurately in each element of the apprenticeship standards: knowledge, skills and behaviours. They use this information diligently to design an individual programme of learning. For example, level 5 apprentices on HR have different dates for completion rather than the standard 24 months. This challenges apprentices to work smartly and efficiently to secure grades higher than a

pass. Consultant trainers know that several apprentices are performing at merit or distinction grades in HR and in learning and development. However, they do not communicate that to apprentices in time to raise their aspirations.

Formalised governance arrangements are not yet in place. Senior leaders have elaborate plans to establish a governance board in 2020. They have used informal arrangements to seek the views of other training providers and professional experts on an ad-hoc basis, which are not fit for purpose. At present, senior leaders do not have arrangements for the scrutiny of their work or to provide challenge and support to enable them to raise the standards of performance and learning to the highest levels.

Senior leaders are not sufficiently involved in the ongoing quality improvement of learning. External observers who conduct observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not measure the impact of consultant trainers on apprentices' learning and progress. Staff take responsibility to share good practice by observing each other on aspects such as induction, enrolment, training and reviews. Too few of these staff are sufficiently qualified in learning and development, and so the sharing of good practice lacks a sharp enough focus. However, observations of progress reviews exemplify good practice because the consultant trainers have designed these themselves.

After analysing data, managers made improvements to the recruitment of butchery apprentices, as some 20% left their programmes within the first three months. Managers have agreed with employers to enrol apprentices – most of whom are between 16 and 19 years of age – only after they have proved their commitment by working in the businesses for three months. All apprentices from the recent cohort have stayed on the programme and are making 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? Significant progress

Apprentices acquire very good skills and develop a sound understanding of the knowledge required to enable them to become particularly effective employees. Trainers – in conjunction with employers – devise programmes of activities that are particularly innovative and effective in the industry. For example, staff planned seminars between butchers and young farmers, enabling apprentices to benefit from extended learning opportunities. Young apprentices on the butchery programme rapidly gain a good knowledge of knife skills, knife sharpening, health and safety, and food safety. Over the ensuing months, they practise and master these skills, using the knowledge they have gained. They know about the signs of different types of contamination of meat, such as foreign bodies and allergenic and chemical contamination. They take appropriate precautions and serve only meat that is safe to consume.

Managers and employers offer the most able apprentices in HR apprenticeships the opportunity to study for additional qualifications at higher levels, such as a diploma. This is at a higher level than the apprenticeship standards require, enabling apprentices to progress in their professional career development more quickly.

Recently introduced webinar training is excellent. This enables consultant trainers to engage apprentices who are in remote locations or who have difficulty in leaving their workplaces to access and attend learning. Consultant trainers design sessions well and they provide appropriate challenge to the apprentices. Apprentices build upon their existing knowledge and gain new skills throughout the sessions.

Apprentices across all apprenticeships make good or better progress. Most are expected to achieve their apprenticeship in the planned period. Consultant trainers review apprentices' progress routinely to ensure that all of them are on track. Staff plan progress reviews well in conjunction with employers, who fully understand the progress their apprentices are making. Consultant trainers quickly intervene if an apprentice is likely to fall behind their progress targets by providing supportive and creative solutions that help to get apprentices back on track.

Assessment of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviour is thorough. Consultant trainers design detailed assignments to check apprentices' understanding and to monitor their progress. These are closely aligned to the requirements of the standards-based apprenticeships. Consultant trainers mark the assignments promptly and provide good and encouraging feedback to help apprentices improve the standard of their work next time. However, due to staff shortages, a few less-confident apprentices on HR programmes did not receive their feedback on time. This made employers and apprentices anxious about their progress. Senior leaders dealt with the issue promptly by employing more staff.

Consultant trainers are highly experienced and vocationally qualified. They have very high expectations of apprentices that reflect their own high standards. Consultant trainers act as good role models and constantly update their own professional skills and knowledge. This contributes to the high standard of apprentices' work.

Almost all apprentices take part in the Outward Bound residential activity that helps them develop their personal skills to very high levels. By undertaking a broad range of activities, staff take the apprentices out of their comfort zones. Apprentices reflect on their behaviours as individuals and as team players. Their confidence level grows significantly and they improve their team leadership skills. Inspectors agreed with the apprentices that the residential weekend is invaluable in developing the skills and behaviours required for their qualification, particularly for those who have not been in education or training recently.

Managers and consultant trainers plan well the development of discrete functional skills in English and mathematics. Apprentices who require functional skills qualifications to achieve their apprenticeship receive highly individualised training that meets their needs well. Consultant trainers are currently reviewing their courses

to ensure that the ongoing promotion of English and mathematical skills throughout the apprenticeship is further enhanced, for example by including spreadsheet training in data analysis classes and the closer marking of English language usage in written assignments.

Trainers – in close partnership with their line managers – conduct a thorough initial assessment of all apprentices against their current knowledge, skills and behaviours. They use this information well to design an individualised programme of learning. Senior managers review the progress of apprentices on a regular weekly basis to ensure that apprentices complete their apprenticeship in time. In their monthly calls with senior managers, lead consultant trainers also share good practice to improve the performance of their apprentices.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding of apprentices are well considered and thorough. The newly designated safeguarding lead is suitably qualified, experienced and skilled. He has revised the process and guidelines for disclosure to make it easier for staff to deal with any safeguarding issues. There have been no safeguarding incidents to report to date.

All consultant trainers – including the senior managers – have appropriate knowledge and awareness of all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, which they gained through valuable training from the local college.

Senior managers employ only staff who are suitable to work with children and young adults. Managers know their young apprentices well. Employers support their apprentices in butchery shops across the country. Apprentices work safely.

Apprentices learn about safeguarding topics as part of their induction to apprenticeship standards. They have a basic awareness of risks in society and how to protect themselves from these, including the risks of radicalisation. However, many of them do not have a deep enough understanding of such topics to be able to apply this knowledge to their daily lives.

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