

Capital 4 Training 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 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.

Capital 4 Training Limited has provided training on a commercial basis and as a subcontractor since 2012. The company started training levy-funded apprentices in August 2017, and this is the focus of this monitoring visit. Capital 4 Training currently trains 58 apprentices, most of whom are in employment with local authorities or the highways infrastructure sector. Around four fifths of apprentices are in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber region and the rest are in Portsmouth and Essex. Nearly two thirds of apprentices are on management, team leader or customer service standards-based apprenticeships. The rest are on apprenticeship frameworks at levels 2 or 3 in occupational work supervision, facility services, team leading, business administration or construction operations.

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 well-planned and well-researched curriculum rationale that takes account of local labour market intelligence and responds very well to employers' skills development needs. For example, they offer apprenticeships in management to satisfy demand from local employers to upskill staff transferring from technical areas to direct management of personnel. Leaders and managers plan to develop the curriculum offer by responding to emerging skills requirements in the local economy. For example, they plan to meet the growing demand for digital skills in the region by providing the new junior content producer standards-based apprenticeship. They plan sustainable curriculum development carefully and in line with the company's capacity.

Leaders and managers have strong relationships with employers, which they use well to inform their curriculum strategy. They draw on the extensive contacts and good reputation that they have already established with employers during their years of operation as a subcontractor. Employers receive a high level of professional support through frequent contact with Capital 4 Training.

Leaders and managers ensure that their provision complies with the principles of apprenticeships. Company staff work closely with employers to ensure that they understand and fulfil their contribution to training. As a result, apprentices receive their full entitlement to all aspects of the curriculum, including that for off-the-job training.

Leaders and managers recruit their apprentices with integrity, ensuring that candidates are suitable for training. Apprentices are well prepared for the demands of their apprenticeships and receive high-quality information, advice and guidance at the start of their programmes. Leaders and managers are appropriately selective about the employers and apprentices with whom they work. They undertake thorough risk assessments of potential employers in relation to health and safety and financial stability. However, they have not yet identified the reasons why too many apprentices leave their programmes before completion.

Leaders and managers accurately identify most areas for improvement across the provision and they plan appropriate actions to address them. However, in a few cases, self-assessment and quality improvement focus on the development of processes rather than on the impact of these processes on learners. Leaders and managers do not include certain areas for improvement in their quality improvement plans, such as the low proportion of apprentices on occupational work supervision frameworks who make prompt progress. Consequently, they do not act as quickly as they should to address these issues.

Effective leadership support from an external mentor helps leaders and managers to develop their business strategy well. However, leaders and managers have no arrangements for external support and challenge in relation to the quality of education. As a result, a few improvements, such as in relation to the proportion of apprentices who remain on their programme, do not happen as quickly as they should.

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

Tutors and assessors have good levels of expertise and experience. They use these well to ensure that apprentices develop strong subject knowledge that takes account of the latest industry standards. Leaders have used strong performance management measures well to ensure that they now have the right staff in place to manage and deliver high-quality apprenticeships. Tutors and assessors whose skills sets did not match the company's high expectations have moved on. A new quality manager is in post to oversee quality assurance. This has increased external partners' confidence in the company.

Tutors and assessors benefit from regular training that enhances their teaching skills and helps to ensure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training. Staff training is responsive to individual development needs and focuses on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as upon statutory requirements. For example, tutors and assessors undertake training on approaches to assessment, embedding mathematics in vocational areas and providing support for learners with dyslexia.

Apprentices develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours well as a result of the expert training that they receive. For example, management apprentices develop new knowledge about approaches to leadership and new skills in conflict resolution and delegation.

Leaders and managers plan the mathematics and English curriculums skilfully to ensure that apprentices gain the maximum benefit at the most appropriate points in their programme. As a result, apprentices, including those who are exempt from taking qualifications in these subjects, develop their mathematical and English skills well from their starting points. For example, management apprentices develop mathematical skills and knowledge when they study finance. They enhance and accelerate their theoretical knowledge by applying it to financial management tasks at work. This helps to ensure that even those apprentices who have degrees in subjects with mathematical content, such as computer science, develop new skills and knowledge. These include, for example, those in relation to balance sheets and audit. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to recruit a mathematics specialist to sustain and develop the high quality of teaching in mathematics.

Trainers and assessors provide effective feedback that ensures that apprentices know how to improve their work. As a result, the large majority of apprentices produce work of a high standard. For example, level 2 team leading apprentices readily incorporate management theory into their work and use it well to identify and evaluate management styles in leading organisations.

Apprentices are ambitious and have positive attitudes to work and study. They are well aware of their assessment requirements including, for those on standards-based apprenticeships, end-point assessment. The large majority of apprentices are rightly confident that they will complete their apprenticeships successfully.

Apprentices are well prepared for enhanced roles and promoted positions at work. For example, they develop useful skills in budgeting and in staff supervision. This enables them to progress to new management roles.

Trainers and assessors do not routinely coordinate and schedule off-the-job training effectively to ensure that apprentices make all the progress of which they are capable. Although all apprentices receive their entitlement to training, a few apprentices complete their off-the-job training in a self-directed and unplanned manner which delays their progress.

Too many apprentices do not stay on their programmes until the end and so fail to complete their apprenticeship. Currently, only around three quarters of apprentices who started their programmes remain on them.

Apprentices on the occupational work supervision apprenticeship make slow progress, because of work commitments dictated by the weather. These apprentices work in highway infrastructure development and have to do certain jobs when the weather is good. Curriculum planning does not take this sufficiently into account to ensure that these apprentices make progress according to planned timescales.

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

Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding and have developed successfully a vigilant culture of safeguarding throughout the organisation. They have provided significant resources to underpin this culture, including the recent full-time appointment of a highly experienced and appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead. All staff undertake relevant safeguarding training, including keeping learners safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

The designated safeguarding lead has well-established links with external safeguarding partners and extensive knowledge of the key safeguarding risks in the local area, such as those relating to sexual exploitation and drug offences. Staff use this expertise well to inform apprentices about how to stay safe from any dangers that they may encounter. Assessors check apprentices' understanding of these issues regularly in reviews. As a result, apprentices know how to keep themselves and others safe. They know how to report any concerns that they may have.

Leaders have ensured that strong safer recruitment procedures are in place. All staff who need it have a disclosure and barring service check in place. Managers take up references before appointing new staff. These procedures contribute well to apprentices' safety.

Leaders and managers have established an appropriate system for staff to review, record and report on any safeguarding issues that come to light. They have not tested this process because no issues have occurred.

Leaders have put in place a rudimentary risk assessment relating to the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. This makes a brief reference to local risks, such as the high incidence of far-right activity in the region, but it focuses mainly on processes rather than on the impact on apprentices. The risk assessment requires development and the inclusion of an action plan to address how the provider will mitigate the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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