

TMS Learning and Skills Support Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Julie Steele HMI

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

TMS Learning and Skills Support Ltd (TMS) was founded in October 2014. Based in Bromley, it provides apprenticeships in business administration from level 2 to level 4 for Ealing Council. TMS has been providing apprenticeships through subcontracting arrangements since January 2015 and became a prime contract holder in May 2017. Twelve apprentices are on programme, working towards level 2, 3 and 4 framework qualifications in business administration.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made to ensure that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision? Reasonable progress

Leaders have made good use of the knowledge and skills they acquired during their time as a subcontracting partner, to develop an apprenticeship programme that meets the business needs of Ealing Council effectively. Almost all apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully within the time planned, and most continue into better paid employment.

Apprentices benefit from the effective partnership working that exists between leaders at TMS and managers at Ealing Council. Leaders and managers review apprentices' progress towards completing their qualification assiduously. They take swift and effective action to intervene should an apprentice be at risk of not completing. Leaders' and managers' actions ensure that apprentices make good progress in developing the skills they need to carry out their job roles fully.

Apprentices and their managers have a good understanding of an apprentice's entitlement to off-the-job learning. Assessors monitor this entitlement closely to ensure that the learning apprentices undertake is useful and purposeful to their job roles.

Leaders do not always have sufficient oversight of all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. They do not, for example, evaluate the quality of individual performance meetings between apprentices and their assessors. Leaders correctly acknowledge the need to review the arrangements they have in place, and have recently appointed a quality manager.

Leaders do not always monitor the performance of freelance staff sufficiently. When leaders ask staff to take part in external training, they often do not know whether staff have done so.

Leaders have made slow progress towards preparing to implement the new apprenticeship standards. They have not ensured that staff receive effective training and preparation to provide the level 3 standards in business administration, when new apprentices start their learning in January 2019. Plans to secure the required

final assessment of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours are at a very early stage of development.

What progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Apprentices are motivated and enjoy their apprenticeship. They relish the opportunity to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours relevant to their job roles. Apprentices in customer-facing roles deal frequently with difficult situations involving angry or distressed members of the public. They learn to mediate and manage challenging situations effectively. Mentoring arrangements with workplace managers are strong and highly effective. As a result, apprentices settle into the job quickly.

Most apprentices start their qualification with competent information and technology skills. They develop these skills by using them to keep accurate and precise case notes and client records. Apprentices understand the importance of storing confidential information securely, and know not to disclose or discuss the personal information of service users.

Assessors ensure that apprentices benefit from frequent contact through effective progress reviews and assessments. They use their good subject knowledge to guide apprentices effectively in their learning. Assessors arrange extra help when apprentices fall behind or miss sessions. Most apprentices make expected progress in their learning.

Staff do not ensure that they use the assessment of apprentices' prior skills, knowledge and job roles effectively to plan their apprenticeship programmes. Assessors do not plan learning programmes to be specific enough to an apprentice's job role or previous occupational experience. All apprentices complete the same optional elements of their programme. For example, they all take project management, although a few already hold a relevant project management qualification.

Apprentices receive effective careers advice and information at the start of their programme. They understand the opportunities available to them on completion of their programme. A small proportion of apprentices are unclear of the benefits of completing an apprenticeship or the options open to them.

Help for the small minority of apprentices who still need to complete their functional skills mathematics qualifications is insufficient. Assessors do not always focus sufficiently on enabling apprentices to develop their skills through the tasks and activities that they provide.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? **Insufficient progress**

Effective safeguarding arrangements are not in place.

Leaders have yet to establish a culture of safeguarding their apprentices. Apprentices do not regard their assessors as playing a vital role in keeping them safe. They do not disclose their concerns for their personal safety to assessors. Apprentices' understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when working online or when using social media, is limited.

Managers have a limited understanding of the wider social, economic and mental well-being factors that are potential indicators of individual apprentices' vulnerability. When assessors review apprentices' progress, they do not use discussions of current and local incidents effectively. Consequently, they do not extend apprentices' understanding of safeguarding, British values and the threats associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are underdeveloped. For example, no policy or procedure is in place to secure the safety of apprentices when working online. Lines of responsibility, and how staff and apprentices report aspects of concern, are unclear. Leaders have not set out the lines of communication between themselves and employers about sharing information when safeguarding issues are disclosed by apprentices. This leaves apprentices at risk of remaining in situations where they are vulnerable or at risk. Through the recruitment processes, leaders ensure that staff are safe to work with apprentices and vulnerable adults.

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