

Randstad Solutions 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.

Randstad Solutions Limited (Randstad) started planning its levy funded standards-based apprenticeship programmes in 2015. The first group of apprentices started in October 2017 on the level 2 customer service practitioner standard. In December 2017, a group started on the level 3 recruitment consultant standard and, in August 2018, a group started on the level 2 recruitment resourcer standard. Currently, 105 apprentices are on the programmes. All of the apprentices are employed by Randstad and are spread across the country. Randstad does not use subcontractors for any aspect of the programmes and is not a subcontractor delivering any other government-funded training.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear rationale for their apprenticeship programmes, which meet requirements. Leaders have focused well on ensuring that each apprentice has a clearly structured programme, and one that allows them to receive the required 20% off-the-job training and the opportunities to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Leaders and managers worked closely with existing providers of apprenticeship programmes to consider good practice in order to set up the programmes effectively.

Leaders have made a good investment in resources, which are used effectively to deliver the programmes. They invested in new electronic planning and monitoring systems, additional staff in the training teams and a new apprenticeship management team.

The links between training and operational staff at all levels lead to positive professional relationships. Operational staff are informed of the programmes and the expectations of their roles as line managers and directors. Although involved in planning the programmes, operational staff are not fully aware of the progress of the

apprentices because, while the intention is that the staff attend key apprentice review meetings, this does not always happen.

Randstad staff use their core business skills of recruiting well so that apprentices are recruited with integrity, for example by ensuring that suitable criteria are used for selection. Retention of apprentices was initially low, but this has improved with recent cohorts.

Leaders closely monitor the impact that the training has on the business. In like-for-like comparisons, apprentices are more productive than their peers, and the turnover rate is lower.

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

Apprentices develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours that are directly relevant to their workplaces. Operational staff value these skills and see apprentices as important members of their team. Relevant skills include a clear awareness of the challenges that clients face due to the approaching Christmas break, showing empathy during the discussions and agreeing contact in the new year.

Apprentices receive clear guidance about their programmes and how they will benefit them in their job roles. The training includes an effective mix of high-quality, online learning materials, workshops and individual coaching. Trainers work well with line managers to coordinate the training with apprentices' work roles.

Apprentices develop new English skills relevant to their work. This is particularly true of their speaking and listening skills, which are essential. However, staff neither routinely correct apprentices' mistakes in spelling and grammar nor provide feedback to apprentices on the quality of their written English skills so that they might help them develop skills further.

Trainers use their industry experience well to develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, individual coaching enables apprentices following recruitment programmes to reflect on how they can use their new skills in the workplace. Trainers work well with apprentices to check their understanding in depth, and they help them develop this further.

Apprentices benefit from well-planned and detailed assessment. Good feedback, with clear action points, helps apprentices and their line managers understand what needs to be done to improve skills further. The awarding organisation has only very recently released the details for end-point assessments. Therefore, although apprentices are aware that this is a feature of their programme, they are not yet aware of the details of these assessments.

Most apprentices make expected or better progress from their starting points. Staff closely monitor progress on an individual basis, using an online tracking system that captures all contact with the apprentices. However, managers are not yet able to evaluate progress by cohort and identify trends in performance over time. They are aware of this and plan to develop ways to give them this information.

Managers have focused to date on the readiness of Randstad to deliver the new standards. The self-assessment process includes evidence from all key stakeholders, and managers have produced a brief report and improvement plan. The plan and report are not yet incisive enough or contain sufficiently detailed actions to focus on the impact on apprentices. Leaders had planned a review of the self-assessment process on one of the days of the inspection.

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

Leaders work effectively to keep apprentices safe. Randstad has a positive culture of safeguarding. Leaders have established 'health checks' at various stages during each apprentice's six-month probation period. These checks are carried out by the human resources staff, independent of the apprenticeship team. Apprentices receive a wide range of effective online training to help them understand how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders have established clear programmes to help develop apprentices' understanding of mental, physical and financial well-being, and adopt safe and healthy practices. For example, leaders have recently launched a new initiative focusing on mental health, in cooperation with a major national mental health charity.

Leaders have recently established a very effective way for apprentices to raise concerns anonymously. Apprentices can log one-way anonymous conversations and the relevant manager replies to the comments, without knowing who made them, with good advice and a clear offer of further support. Managers reply promptly to apprentices' concerns.

Too many apprentices do not have a clear understanding of subjects relating to British values and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Trainers discuss these subjects thoroughly during induction, and apprentices who have recently started have a detailed understanding of them. However, staff do not reinforce this understanding during apprentices' programmes, and those who have been on their programmes for a long time do not have the same depth of understanding.

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