

The Autism Project – CareTrade

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

The Autism Project – CareTrade was inspected in January 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the four main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

The Autism Project is part of the CareTrade Charitable Trust, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, based in Southwark, London. CareTrade has run employment-based provision since 2010, and The Autism Project was developed from that provision. The Autism Project was listed as an approved provider in August 2016. It offers day provision for young people with autism spectrum disorder aged between 18 and 25. The breadth of previous educational attainment of students on entry is very wide, ranging from experience of higher education to entry level. Students are in work placements four days a week, with one day in class.

All of the students follow a preparation for employment programme, which includes functional skills, where required, and employability. Second-year students also attend a job club. The work placements are mostly in local hospitals. The project receives students on placements funded by eight local authorities, and all students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. At the time of this visit, The Autism Project had 19 students.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that all students have an understanding of safeguarding and equality and diversity early in their programme? **Significant progress**

Leaders and managers have successfully overhauled the student induction process and introduced the themes of safeguarding and equality and diversity to their day one induction workshop. As a result, students are aware of key safeguarding messages and the contact details of key members of staff from the first day of their programme.

Leaders and managers have successfully introduced an induction workshop for parents and carers prior to the young person starting at the project. As a result, parents and carers are aware of the policies and procedures for safeguarding and equality and diversity, and are familiar with the language The Autism Project staff use with the students. Parents and carers are then able to reinforce the learning

around these topics at home using the same language, ensuring consistency and helping the students to retain the information.

Students now benefit from a refresher induction day at the beginning of every term so that they can recap what they have learned about safeguarding and equality and diversity; this session enables them to retain the information over a longer period of time. In addition, each term, tutors introduce additional safeguarding and equality and diversity information that might challenge students further, as well as developing and deepening their understanding. For example, this term they have undertaken a session on staying safe specifically related to knife crime, following the recent guidance issued by the Metropolitan Police. Students in both Year 1 and Year 2 show a good understanding of safeguarding and know what to do to keep themselves and others safe.

Students also have a good understanding of what diversity means and how issues relating to equality might affect their everyday lives and in the workplace. They are able to give examples of where they have had to consider some aspect of equality or diversity in their job role. For example, they might need to support a member of the public who has a disability.

Students create a classroom agreement at the beginning of their training in which they celebrate the diversity of the group and promote equality. All the members of the group sign this agreement to demonstrate that they will respect each other and consider each other's needs and views. These agreements are displayed in the classroom along with the work they have undertaken on safeguarding, British values and equality and diversity.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that they monitor effectively the quality of provision and as a result put appropriate actions in place for improvement? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers monitor effectively the quality of provision through a range of appropriate quality assurance activities. Leaders and managers know their provision well; they are aware of the strengths of the provision and which areas still need to improve or be further developed. They accurately evaluate the impact the provision has on the students; however, they do not express their knowledge of the quality of provision well in documentation such as self-assessment reports and action plans.

Leaders have successfully reviewed the process by which they observe the quality of classroom and workplace teaching and learning. They have introduced a more structured and focused process, so that individual members of staff receive developmental feedback and suggested actions for further improvement. Leaders have identified criteria by which they consistently assess the quality and effectiveness of classroom practice. However, leaders' written assessments do not

always clearly identify the impact of teachers' practice on students' learning; instead, they focus too much on what the teacher is doing.

Leaders have introduced formal observations of the work of job coaches, based around the role descriptors for this post of mentor, motivator, goal-setter, confidence builder and facilitator of employer engagement. As a result, managers can successfully evaluate the quality and impact of the job coaches' practice and give feedback and development points that are sharply focused.

Leaders use the formal observation outcomes and the subsequent objectives set for each member of staff to feed into the annual staff appraisal process, established since the inspection in 2018. Leaders can also use this information to support the evaluation and improvement of staff's work through the performance management procedures.

Leaders and managers frequently gather feedback from students and from employers and have used this to inform changes they have made to aspects of the provision. For example, they have created a management pack for workplace supervisors. In response to student feedback, they have introduced a social noticeboard and social planning group for the students, to help them plan and share information about enrichment activities.

How effectively do leaders and managers ensure that students' starting points are recorded accurately and that the progress students make from these starting points is effectively tracked and recorded? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have put in place effective processes to identify accurately students' starting points in English, mathematics and personal and social development. All students now have targets that relate directly to their education, health and care plans. Tutors and job coaches frequently review students' progress and set weekly learning targets for their activities in the workplace, in functional skills lessons and in employability and job club. These short-term targets are specific and well defined. Tutors record students' targets and reviews in their individual learning records. Students are aware of the targets they are working towards on their placements and make good progress.

Managers and tutors recognise that they need to make more effective use of initial assessment outcomes to ensure that long-term targets are equally specific and focused on skills development.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that all employers receive individual risk assessments and support plans for students on placement? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have successfully ensured that all employers receive an individual risk assessment and support plan for the student whom they host on placement. The risk assessment and support plan contain a description of the medical diagnosis and the impact this has on the student's behaviour and their subsequent needs. The Autism Project staff provide a comprehensive oral briefing on the young person to the manager or workplace supervisor, before they start their placement. As a result, the manager is fully informed and can effectively support the student's individual needs. The Autism Project staff also provide good, on-the-spot support with any queries, as well as advice and strategies to support the development of the student, as the need arises. However, the support plan does not yet provide employers with information on how to anticipate and manage the student's behaviour and support their skills development.

Staff from The Autism Project provide training on understanding autism spectrum disorder to all the staff at one of the hospitals with which they work. In addition, they deliver training to the departments in each hospital where students are placed, so that staff understand the specific and individual characteristics of students who are on placement with them.

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