

# Interlearn Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

15–18 January 2019

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications in the planned timescale is too low.
- Too many apprentices taking frameworks in care management at level 5 do not achieve their qualifications. Apprentices currently on frameworks in early years make slow progress.
- Managers do not have enough oversight of the quality of provision at subcontractors or of the progress their apprentices make.
- Board members have not supported and challenged senior leaders sufficiently. They do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that they, or their staff, use their data reports and systems well enough to have effective oversight of the quality of the provision.
- Apprentices do not receive frequent and helpful feedback on their work and on the progress they make. As a result, they do not know how to improve their work or make rapid progress.
- Assessors supporting apprentices in early years, team-leading and care management do not plan assessment effectively to ensure that apprentices achieve individual units within their qualifications quickly enough.
- Trainers do not support apprentices early enough in the programme to develop the English and mathematical skills they need to pass their functional skills qualifications.
- The promotion of English and mathematical skills, other than those required for qualifications, is insufficient. Apprentices do not appreciate the importance of improving these skills.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Apprentices taking standards in accounting, transportation and management enjoy effective teaching and make good progress.
- Partnerships with employers are strong. Leaders, managers and subcontractors have successfully designed apprenticeship programmes that meet employers' business needs.
- Apprentices improve their confidence and gain a wide range of new skills that support them to become valued employees.
- The vast majority of adult learners complete and achieve their qualifications in personal development and customer services. A high proportion gain employment.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Interlearn Limited (Interlearn) is an independent learning provider owned by the Alacrity Group and based in Bromsgrove in the West Midlands. The Alacrity Group purchased the provider – formerly known as Manley Summers Housing Personnel Limited – in February 2018. Interlearn gained direct contracts to offer apprenticeship programmes and adult learning programmes in May 2016. Interlearn delivers the majority of its programmes in the West Midlands, London and the South East, and works with three subcontractors.
- At the time of the inspection, no adult learners were in learning. The majority of the 420 apprentices study advanced and higher apprenticeship frameworks in early years, care management and team-leading, and apprenticeship standards at levels 3, 4 and 5 in transportation and maintenance, operations management, project management, and accounting. Approximately 180 apprentices study with the subcontractors.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes on time, and the proportion who achieve their qualifications in care management and early years, by:
  - ensuring that all apprentices have access to frequent and timely assessment in the workplace
  - supporting trainers, assessors and learning support coaches to give apprentices specific and helpful feedback on their work, that enables them to make more rapid progress
  - ensuring that apprentices have access to functional skills trainers and resources at the start of their programme, and that they understand the importance of developing their English and mathematical skills
  - ensuring that staff identify quickly apprentices who fall behind and support them well to catch up and make good progress.
- Develop the arrangements for board members to provide effective support and challenge to senior leaders and managers on all aspects of the provision, including subcontracted provision, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for apprentices.
- Improve the management and support arrangements for subcontractors, by:
  - ensuring that managers check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more frequently
  - collecting accurate information about the progress apprentices make
  - arranging opportunities for subcontractors to share good practice.
- Ensure that managers and staff use their data reports and online systems consistently to gain an accurate picture of apprentices' progress and attendance rates, and that they record information in a timely manner.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since buying Manley Summers Housing Personnel Limited, senior leaders have changed the name, rebranded the business and recruited a new, well-qualified and experienced team to take the business forward. However, they were too slow to identify the apprentices, particularly those on the early years programme, who made slow progress, and to put in the appropriate interventions. As a result, too many apprentices experienced disruption to their learning.
- The management of the three new subcontractors working with Interlearn requires improvement. Leaders successfully terminated the contracts of the poorly performing subcontractors that they had inherited. They have implemented appropriate compliance procedures, but they have been too slow to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the new subcontractors. They do not check in enough detail the progress that apprentices make, or offer enough support and opportunity to subcontractors to share good practice.
- Leaders and managers do not use their range of data reports and systems consistently to enable them to have a clear oversight of the quality of the apprenticeship programmes. Neither do they ensure that their staff use them routinely, or well enough. Trainers and tutors do not upload or mark apprentices' work frequently enough on the online portfolio. As a result, leaders and managers do not have a clear enough understanding of the progress apprentices make. Leaders have not checked closely enough the validity of records of apprentices reported as being on a break in learning. This resulted in an inaccurate achievement rate for 2017/18.
- Leaders and managers have an awareness of most of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. However, they do not adequately evaluate important aspects, such as the effectiveness of governance or the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Where they have identified areas for improvement, they have not always made sufficient progress in rectifying them, such as in the use of data.
- Leaders and managers have not implemented their plan to develop learners' and apprentices' skills in English and mathematics quickly enough. The strategy is well developed and clear. It is too soon, however, to see the impact that this has on improving the progress apprentices make in achieving functional skills qualifications and improving their skills in English and mathematics.
- Leaders, managers, staff and subcontractors have developed strong partnerships with the employers with whom they work. Together, they ensure that they meet the principles of the apprenticeship programmes. They develop appropriate programmes to meet employers' needs. Employers commit to the off-the-job training entitlement and many employers teach and train their apprentices themselves. For example, a large rail network company teaches its apprentices in block sessions at the start of the programme.
- Performance management of staff is effective. Leaders have arranged that ineffective staff leave the business. They have appropriate policies and procedures in place to review the performance of staff. Staff appraisal outcomes link closely to staff development and training. Leaders have recently recruited managers who assess accurately the quality of

teaching and learning in taught sessions.

- Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices and employers receive good-quality and detailed information, advice and guidance before apprentices start their apprenticeships. Applicants attend well-planned advice sessions informing them of the requirements of, and the commitment needed to complete, an apprenticeship programme. Apprentices have a good understanding of the benefits of the programme and how it supports them to move on in their career.

## **The governance of the provider**

- The members of the recently established non-executive board do not know the company's strengths and weaknesses in sufficient detail. They do not offer the appropriate level of challenge to the chief executive and other senior leaders. They do not hold them to account to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effective use of management systems.
- The chief executive and senior leaders have developed a clear strategic vision for the development of the company and its sister companies, to offer a full support package for employers, learners and apprentices. They have recruited non-executive and advisory board members with relevant experience to work with senior leaders to take this forward. They have agreed a clear schedule of meetings and a plan to introduce an employee ownership scheme. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives on improving the experience for learners and apprentices.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders and managers ensure that effective policies, procedures and checks are in place. These cover all aspects of safe practice about learners and apprentices. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy receive the appropriate level of training. All staff, including those at the subcontractors, complete safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.
- Apprentices feel safe at work and when attending their training sessions. They receive helpful information about online safety, abuse, mental health, radicalisation and extremism, at the start of their programmes. Apprentices have an adequate understanding of safeguarding and the associated risks when using social media. They know to whom to report any concerns at Interlearn or at their subcontractors.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The variation in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between the apprenticeship frameworks and the apprenticeship standards is too great for this provision to be judged good. Apprentices completing standards in transportation, operations management and in accounting at the subcontractor EMA enjoy effective teaching. Too many apprentices on early years at the subcontractor ELA and on care management frameworks make slow progress because of disrupted learning and infrequent assessment.
- Trainers, assessors and learning support coaches do not give apprentices enough clear

and meaningful feedback on their work to help them improve. Too often, they do not mark work uploaded to the online portfolio or confirm it as being complete. Feedback given to apprentices at their progress reviews does not give them a clear understanding of what they need to do to make more rapid progress.

- Assessors supporting apprentices on frameworks in early years, team-leading and care management do not plan assessment effectively to ensure that apprentices achieve individual units within their qualifications quickly enough. For the majority of these apprentices, assessment practice is not timely, and apprentices do not know when and how frequently they will have an assessment in the workplace.
- The majority of trainers and learning support coaches link on-the-job and off-the-job training effectively. They help apprentices understand how to apply what they learn in their taught sessions to their job roles. For example, operational management apprentices know how unconscious bias affects decisions they make at work, when they plan staff development activities. In accountancy, apprentices explain confidently how they use accounting equations in their workplace.
- The vast majority of apprentices enjoy their learning through a variety of off-the-job training activities. For example, they attend frequent masterclasses, peer reviews, mentoring and work shadowing. Apprentices benefit from good-quality learning resources. Relevant sector workbooks in team-leading, operations management and recruitment help apprentices to develop their knowledge of these topics.
- Trainers, assessors and learning support coaches have very relevant industrial knowledge and experience. They use these effectively to help apprentices understand the specific requirements they need in their job roles. For example, trainers supporting apprentices on train conductor standards ensure that apprentices have a detailed understanding of the health and safety requirements and legislation relating to the rail industry.
- Trainers support well the small number of Interlearn apprentices who have additional learning needs. For example, they make appropriate changes to learning resources and put on extra coaching sessions to support apprentices to overcome individual barriers to learning. As a result, apprentices make their expected progress. However, trainers do not identify quickly enough that a small minority of apprentices at subcontracted provision have additional learning needs. They are slow to put in place the appropriate support.
- The assessment of apprentices' prior skills, knowledge and behaviours, including in English and mathematics, is effective. Recruitment staff, trainers and learning coaches use this information correctly to ensure that apprentices enrol on the appropriate programme. They also ensure that they work towards the correct level of English and mathematics functional skills qualifications.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Trainers do not support apprentices early enough in their programme to develop the English and mathematical skills they need to pass their functional skills qualifications. Apprentices work independently through the online resources, but too often they wait up to six months before receiving specific support or feedback on how well they have done.
- The promotion of English and mathematical skills, other than those needed for qualifications, is underdeveloped. Apprentices do not always appreciate the importance of

improving these skills or understand how they help them in their workplace. Managers recognise this and have agreed a training programme for trainers to improve their confidence in supporting apprentices. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this.

- Managers do not check apprentices' attendance at training sessions, assessments and progress reviews in enough detail. Apprentices' attendance at masterclasses and off-the-job training sessions is high. Employers and subcontractors teach many of the sessions, but managers do not collect this attendance information. As a result, they do not have a full understanding of attendance rates, nor if they rise or fall.
- Too few trainers, assessors and learning support coaches have the confidence to extend apprentices' understanding of personal, social and ethical issues. Managers have recently recognised this and have provided training and materials to support staff to do this more effectively. However, it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.
- The majority of apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that support them to be effective employees in their workplaces. Team-leading apprentices develop skills in project management and in how to monitor staff performance effectively. Most apprentices gain confidence in their job roles and in dealing with challenging work situations.
- Most trainers and learning support coaches support apprentices sufficiently to understand issues related to emotional and physical well-being. For example, team-leading apprentices consider the impact of stress on themselves and those they manage. Apprentices on transportation standards learn how an unhealthy lifestyle, poor diet and a lack of sleep link to fatigue, and the potential impact this has on them as train drivers.
- Trainers and learning support coaches extend apprentices' knowledge about safeguarding to issues specifically related to their job roles and occupation. For example, transportation apprentices know how to manage unruly crowds at railway stations to avoid serious incidents. Apprentices on early years programmes learn how to keep themselves and children safe by carrying out risk assessments.
- Most apprentices have an adequate understanding of British values and what it means to be a British citizen. Apprentices work well together in sessions and at work. They respect each other's views. However, in subcontracted provision, a minority of apprentices have only a superficial understanding of British values. Apprentices do not always complete the tasks their trainers set them to help them deepen their knowledge.
- The vast majority of apprentices produce good work or work that is at the required standard for the level of their qualifications. However, a minority of apprentices produce poorly presented written work, using inappropriate 'text' writing. Trainers and learning coaches do not correct this.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale is too low. In care management level 5 programmes, the proportion is very low.
- Too many apprentices taking qualifications in early years make very slow progress. Managers have recently transferred these apprentices to their subcontractor ELA, but its actions to improve apprentices' progress have been too slow.

- Apprentices completing professional accounting level 4 and assistant accountant level 3 standards at the subcontractor EMA make good progress. The majority of apprentices on the range of standards in transportation and maintenance, and those with the subcontractor GBS, also make good progress, as do Interlearn's own apprentices in operations management.
- Apprentices develop a wide range of new skills during their training programme, and the vast majority remain in employment on completion of their qualifications.
- In 2017/18, the vast majority of adult learners achieved their qualifications. A high proportion of adult learners gained employment immediately after they had completed their courses. However, managers do not know whether adult learners sustained this employment.
- Managers check closely the achievement between different groups of learners. The large gap in achievement between male and female apprentices in 2017/18 has reduced. The differences in the achievement rates between other groups are insignificant.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	58814
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	747
CEO	Matt Corden
Telephone number	01527 407140
Website	<a href="http://www.interlearn.co.uk">www.interlearn.co.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	19	81	32	202	1	85		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	ELA EMA training Ltd Guard Business Solutions (GBS)							



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plan. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions at employers and subcontractors. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Jane Hughes, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector
Gail Shenton	Ofsted Inspector
Francoise Beregovoi	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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