

# Strive Training (London) Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1270921

**Name of lead inspector:** Charles Searle HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the ESFA. 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 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Strive Training (London) Limited (Strive) has delivered adult learning as a subcontractor for further education colleges in London before gaining its own direct delivery contract. Strive offers qualifications in employability, functional skills, business administration, retail, warehousing, health and social care, customer service, and information and communication technology (ICT) at entry level up to level 2. It has three main centres in Croydon, Tottenham and Harrow. It currently has 69 adult learners on courses.

### Themes

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders and managers have successfully built on their experience as a subcontractor for further education colleges in London to design and deliver a curriculum targeted exclusively at meeting the needs of unemployed adults. They work effectively with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to provide its customers with a range of courses to develop the skills and behaviours that enable them to re-enter the job market. Partnership managers and job advisers at JCP value highly the flexible and swift way that staff at Strive respond to the changing needs of their customers, for example, by offering ICT qualifications at different levels. This accommodates customers' requirement to use computers for the first time to access the new Universal Credit system. It also helps to develop the digital skills of those wanting to change their career paths.

Leaders and managers have considerably enhanced the value of their training for unemployed adults by developing sector work-based academies with major employers in the retail, warehousing, and health and social care sectors. This enables learners to achieve vocational qualifications, while at the same time they prepare for guaranteed interviews with specific employers. As a result, significant numbers of adults have secured jobs after completing their training. Employers value the employees recruited through Strive's sector work-based academies because they

show greater levels of commitment and reliability than those they employ through more conventional channels.

Leaders and managers have an accurate and self-critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. This enables them to identify and act on areas that require improvement. For example, they recently strengthened their governance arrangements by establishing a panel chaired by an experienced senior leader in the further education sector to provide them with external scrutiny and challenge. Leaders and managers use management information well to enable them to identify and intervene to rectify areas of poor performance. As a result, the quality of delivery at the different centres is of a consistently high standard.

Leaders and managers ensure that the directly employed and freelance teachers who deliver courses are suitably qualified in the vocational subjects that they teach and have relevant work experience to provide learners with up-to-date information on potential careers in these areas.

Leaders and managers routinely monitor the progress that learners make on courses and track their destinations after they achieve their qualifications. This enables them to evaluate how effective courses are in supporting learners to progress into employment or higher level training. Managers acknowledge, however, that the destinations of too many learners are unknown as non-response rates are high.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals?      Significant progress**

Teachers and managers make effective use of information gathered about learners' starting points. They carefully assess learners' existing skills so that almost all learners are on courses at the right level for their abilities. Teachers make good use of information about learners' specific learning needs or mental health difficulties when planning lessons and activities. They also use this information to provide learning support that is well tailored for individuals.

Teachers plan their courses so that learners can develop skills and behaviours incrementally. They support learners to develop and broaden their skills day by day, and to reflect on gains made during each session. Learners who have not been in education for many years, or who have little vocational experience, steadily develop confidence and make good progress. They reflect carefully on their own progress and can give a clear account of the skills they develop.

Managers and teachers ensure that courses are closely focused on developing learners' employment skills. Teachers plan their classes so that almost all learners develop the skills and behaviours that they need to gain jobs or move on to further

learning. For example, in ICT classes, learners become confident in using the latest business software packages and in deciding which software best suits each task. Across all courses, such work-focused activities help learners to feel ready for interviews and employment.

Teachers make good use of well-planned games and activities to overcome learners' anxieties or isolation at the start of courses. As a result, learners work together successfully early on in their programmes. They collaborate readily in classes and support one another sensitively and constructively. They develop strong team-working skills and become well prepared for the work environment. For example, in a business administration class, learners took part in a role play where they received calls and passed information to others. Many said that they would not have had the confidence to approach such a task before the course.

Most learners have a good understanding of the next steps open to them. Teachers and managers provide useful information and guidance to learners at the start and towards the end of their courses. As a result, a high proportion of learners secure jobs, attend interviews, and develop clear career goals. A very small minority of learners did not recall the information provided about employment advice and were uncertain of their next steps.

Teachers develop learners' English skills effectively through vocational examples and during coursework writing activities. Learners begin to use technical vocabulary fluently in their portfolios and in lessons. Most teachers correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, so that learners can improve their work in future. As a result, learners take care to express themselves clearly and accurately, especially in letters to potential employers.

In a minority of lessons, learning resources were of poor quality and accommodation did not aid learning. For example, in one ICT class, the teacher did not have a proper screen on which to project slides and in another lesson some out-of-date handouts were being used.

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

Leaders and managers have established effective safeguarding arrangements that ensure that learners are kept safe. Two experienced and well-trained designated safeguarding leads develop and update regularly a robust set of policies and procedures that are adhered to strictly by supervisors at Strive's different centres. Leaders and managers appoint staff through safe recruitment procedures, including the rigorous checking of references and previous employment histories. All staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Members of the governance panel and senior managers monitor all safeguarding concerns that are reported to the designated safeguarding leads. Although small in number, each concern has been dealt with effectively through appropriate escalation to external agencies for further action.

Managers and teachers pay particular attention to ensuring that learners stay safe online, given the high volume of ICT courses and the constant use of laptops by learners at all centres. They have recently introduced a security system that provides alerts if a learner accesses an inappropriate website.

Tutors are skilled at integrating broader safeguarding concerns into their lessons, making them relevant to specific vocational contexts, such as warehouses and retail centres. Although all learners receive information on the risks of radicalisation and extremism when they start courses, only a few could discuss these in any depth.

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