

# Wealden Leisure Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 2495114

**Name of lead inspector:** Ann Monaghan, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Employer provider

  

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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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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 themes set out below.

Wealden Leisure Limited, operating as Freedom Leisure, provided apprenticeship training since 2010 as a subcontractor for two general further education colleges. In April 2017, the company ceased to be a subcontractor and began to offer its own provision as an employer provider. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 56 apprentices, with 35 on framework-based programmes. The apprenticeship programmes offered include business administration and the company also provides a range of leisure-industry-related programmes at levels 2 and 3. Freedom Leisure Limited operate across approximately 100 centres with apprentices currently based at 24 of these sites.

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers use their extensive experience in the leisure industry well to provide a range of relevant programmes. They have implemented carefully planned provision to meet the needs of the significant number of local communities they serve. They give high priority to ensuring that they have a well-trained staff team to deliver high-quality provision. They invest in the recruitment and development of trainers and assessors before any new apprentices are recruited. This approach has ensured an informed and effective roll-out of apprenticeship provision across centres. The apprenticeships meet the requirements of apprenticeship programmes.

Managers have successfully implemented standards-based apprenticeships. Staff are encouraged and supported to gain knowledge and experience of the final assessment practices. Current apprentices are well informed about how they will be assessed. Managers and assessors are committed to the success of apprentices and put in place a range of interventions to support any learners who are at risk of not achieving.

The board of trustees holds leaders to account for the recruitment of apprentices and sets targets for the success of the programmes. Senior leaders then monitor

progress towards these targets with managers. However, the targets are neither specific nor challenging enough to ensure a sufficiently robust focus on monitoring the quality improvement strategy and the progress of all apprentices.

**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 benefit from their apprenticeship programmes and demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes to learning. They have a good understanding of how their studies will support their career opportunities within the leisure industry.

Assessors liaise effectively with workplace supervisors about apprentices' recruitment, their on-programme progress and their achievement of targets. Supervisors recognise the value that apprentices bring to the business and support their learning and progress. Managers work closely with leisure centre staff to ensure that applicants have the vocational and academic skill level required for success on the apprenticeship programmes. Apprentices are fully aware of the components of their programme and start their studies confidently. For example, supervisors provide a free one-month membership to the complex to allow applicants to improve their swimming skills to support their application for an apprenticeship. Apprentices are fully aware of the variety of ways they will learn, for example through workshops, online learning and shadowing opportunities. This enhanced guidance at the start of the programme is beginning to improve retention levels for those currently on programme.

Apprentices complete an initial assessment in English and mathematics which informs subsequent learning targets. They make good improvement to their English and mathematics skills and are positive about the benefits to their future career in the sector. They have developed a better understanding of the financial aspects of the organisation and hence how their roles contribute towards the growth targets.

Assessors' vocational knowledge is good. Their significant experience of the sector benefits apprentices through their use of workplace links and the broad range of opportunities they plan for off-the-job training. Apprentices talk confidently about the learning and the skills they have developed. For example, they know how fitness testing and exercise technique is beneficial to them in carrying out gym inductions in the workplace.

Tutors plan learning so that apprentices apply theoretical concepts to practical skills development. On fitness-related programmes, apprentices learn about the theory of fitness testing and exercise technique and this is immediately followed up with the practical application to reinforce the learning. Apprentices produce a good standard of written work that meets expectations of the level of learning. Tutors' feedback is detailed and developmental and English errors are identified for correction.

Most apprentices benefit from extensive off-the-job training which is part of the weekly working rota. This includes a good range of relevant activity to enhance their learning. A small minority of apprentices are not always able to undertake off-the-job training as planned. Although such training does take place, it is not always at the most appropriate time to maximise learning. Records of off-the-job training are detailed at the local centre level but are not always centrally updated and this hinders managers' ability to monitor progress.

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

Arrangements for the safeguarding of apprentices are effective. The senior designated safeguarding officer has completed appropriate training. Several other staff are also trained to level 3 as there are wider responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults who use the leisure facilities. Managers have not yet had to investigate any safeguarding incidents relating to apprentices, although they have very good links with a range of local partners as they have made referrals for their wider client group. Staff carry out appropriate recruitment checks.

Managers and staff have a good focus on health and safety. Managers have assessed the risks linked to the implementation of the 'Prevent' duty; however, this is currently too generic and not sufficiently focused on appropriately specific risks. All assessors and trainers receive training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty during their induction process. They also benefit from regular updates provided through the online learning platform.

Apprentices complete a thorough induction programme. They have a good understanding about safeguarding and know who to contact to report any concerns. Apprentices feel and are safe. Apprentices' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism is basic.

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