

SHL Training Solutions Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning 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 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 themes set out below.

SHL Training Solutions Ltd (SHL) received its first publicly funded contract for levy-funded apprenticeships in May 2017. Currently, 42 apprentices are in training. Of these, 12 are studying at level 2, 25 at level 3, two at level 4 and three at level 5. Twenty-eight apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships and 14 are on apprenticeship frameworks. Apprentices' recruitment is to one of nine vocational areas. Those with the most apprentices are team leader/supervisor, business improvement techniques, and supply chain warehouse operative.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Currently, leaders and managers do not have sufficient staff to provide high-quality apprenticeship training. Staff changes have had an adverse impact on apprentices' progress and on the quality of the apprenticeship provision.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that trainers plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job learning effectively. They are insufficiently aware that too many apprentices do not develop substantial new vocational knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours. For example, apprentices who have been in the same employment for many years repeat much of what they know and can do already.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that they comply with the principles and requirements of apprenticeships. For example, a large number of apprentices do not have any time during working hours for off-the-job learning. Leaders and managers do not check sufficiently, before recruiting apprentices, that employers will release them for their full entitlement of off-the-job learning.

Leaders and managers do not have oversight of the progress that apprentices make. Their progress tracking is poor. Too many apprentices make slow progress and leaders and managers do not take swift action to rectify this situation.

Leaders and managers do not identify and eliminate the differences in the quality of the provision. For example, a minority of apprentices receive effective support in English and mathematics, which ensures that they gain their qualifications. However, too many apprentices are slow to start English and mathematics training and their progress is poor.

Leaders and managers do not make sufficient arrangements for apprentices' assessment at the end of their apprenticeship. Too few standards-based apprentices, and their employers, know what they will have to do to satisfy the final assessment requirements.

Leaders and managers are not held to account for the way in which they lead and manage the apprenticeship provision. They do not have appropriate governance arrangements in place.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Insufficient progress

Trainers' target-setting is poor. They place too much emphasis on apprentices completing tasks and units and not enough on the development of their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Targets do not challenge the most able apprentices and ensure that they make rapid progress.

Trainers give insufficient attention to developing all apprentices' English and mathematics at the start of their apprenticeship. They do not define apprentices' starting points accurately or use the results effectively to plan individual learning. Assessors do not support apprentices, who have the necessary qualifications in English and mathematics, to develop further.

Most employers and workplace supervisors do not engage effectively with the apprenticeship provision. They do not plan effective on-the-job learning for apprentices. Supervisors do not provide effective support to enable apprentices to develop their vocational knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours.

Managers' observations of teaching, learning and progress reviews are insufficiently rigorous. They do not focus sufficiently on what apprentices learn and on their progress. Managers' action planning, to help trainers to improve, is poor.

Assessors assess apprentices' work accurately. However, they do not tell apprentices what they can do to improve the standard of their work. Their feedback focuses on what apprentices have done correctly but it is insufficiently developmental. Consequently, too many apprentices are not producing the high-quality answers of which they are capable.

Assessors visit most apprentices regularly in the workplace. They plan and implement off-the-job learning appropriately. This helps apprentices to fulfil partially the vocational requirements of the occupational standards. Assessors also provide effective pastoral support, when required.

Assessors provide many apprentices with good vocationally specific learning resources. These help them to understand their existing or new job roles better. For example, apprenticeships in customer care have high-quality workbooks that identify how the work they complete develops their vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours.

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

Leaders and managers do not take sufficient responsibility for the company's safeguarding arrangements. They have a comprehensive range of safeguarding and safeguarding-related policies and procedures. However, they do not assess the extent to which all members of staff implement them appropriately.

Currently, SHL does not have a designated safeguarding officer (DSO) or deputy DSO. Consequently, apprentices do not have a named person, with relevant training and experience, to contact if safeguarding incidents arise.

Staff training is sporadic and outdated. Leaders and managers do not plan and implement regular and relevant safeguarding training for all members of staff. They do not have clear understanding of who has, and who has not, had an appropriate check and when the checks were made.

Most apprentices have a basic knowledge of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. However, trainers do not develop their knowledge and understanding sufficiently to enable them to identify risks confidently and report problems quickly.

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