

# Gem Partnership Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Andrea Shepherd, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Gem Partnership Limited is a recruitment agency based in north east England. In 2017, the directors introduced Gem Training Limited to the group. The provider has held a contract for the delivery of apprenticeships to levy-paying employers since January 2018. At the time of this monitoring visit, 97 apprentices were on frameworks and standards-based programmes from level 2 to level 4. Of these, 42 apprentices study the level 2 improving operational performance apprenticeship and 43 study business administration, customer services or team leading apprenticeships at level 2 to level 4. The other 12 apprentices study the level 2 supply chain warehouse operations standard, the level 2 recruitment resources standard, the level 3 improvement technician standard or the level 4 improvement practitioner standard.

## Themes

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

### Reasonable progress

Leaders make good use of their recruitment expertise and local labour market knowledge to identify skills gaps. They develop curriculum strategies that meet local needs well. Employers benefit from the training that their apprentices receive and the significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that their apprentices develop. For example, the training enables employers to provide a skilled workforce to use business improvement techniques in the manufacturing industry.

Leaders recruit apprentices with integrity. They take suitable steps to ensure that all apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. All apprentices receive the off-the-job training to which they are entitled. Managers complete detailed training needs analyses to identify appropriate programmes of training and support for each employer. Employers are highly satisfied with the design and flexibility of the programme.

Leaders have clear oversight of the progress that apprentices make and the reasons why a small minority of apprentices leave their programmes early. They take very

effective action in the vast majority of cases to support apprentices who fall behind. Apprentices are, therefore, able to stay on their programme and catch up quickly. Trainers also deliver individual sessions for apprentices who need extra support.

Leaders have a strong commitment to continuous improvement. They take meaningful action to make improvements when concerns arise. For example, they work with one employer to improve the quality of the learning environment and with another to ensure that they meet the off-the-job training requirements fully.

Leaders have not taken enough steps to develop a clear strategy for the delivery of English and mathematics courses for a few apprentices who need to achieve qualifications in these subjects. Resources and planning are not sufficient. Leaders have identified that this needs to change and are planning improvements.

**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**

Leaders and managers recruit trainers who have significant industrial experience and relevant vocational qualifications. Trainers use this expertise successfully to plan and sequence a subject-specific curriculum that includes a range of high-quality on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices quickly develop relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Trainers assess apprentices' prior experience and skills effectively. This enables them to place apprentices on the right programme. Apprentices can quickly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours that benefit employers. For example, they use scanners in warehouses and deal successfully with complaints.

Trainers use assessment well and monitor carefully the progress that apprentices make. They identify gaps in knowledge and provide useful advice on how to improve. Trainers challenge apprentices to produce work of a high standard. For example, apprentices give good responses to questions about planning and decision-making skills. Apprentices are aware of the progress that they have made and the areas they need to work on to improve.

Managers and trainers take substantial steps to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for end-point assessments. Employers and apprentices are fully aware of the expectations of the end-point assessments. Apprentices receive good support with their preparations for these assessments. They can identify what they need to do to achieve high grades.

Trainers provide apprentices with appropriate careers guidance and support them with planning their next steps. Apprentices are clear about their career goals and what they need to do to achieve these.

Trainers who deliver English and mathematics courses do not have enough specialist training to plan and deliver them successfully. Apprentices who need to complete these qualifications do not receive sufficient guidance and support. Consequently, too few apprentices develop the necessary knowledge and skills to pass their functional skills examinations.

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

Leaders implement a comprehensive approach to keeping apprentices and staff safe. They have a clear understanding of current and emerging risks, such as exploitation. Managers use a wide range of highly effective policies to mitigate against these risks and provide excellent support to apprentices when necessary. They also deliver very successful coaching and mentoring to employers to develop their own practices.

Leaders use safe recruitment practices and ensure that all staff receive extensive training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They work well with local agencies, such as Mind, to provide frequent updates on relevant topics.

Trainers deliver a very well-structured programme of training and assessment to apprentices on a wide range of topics such as online safety, modern slavery and county lines. All apprentices can explain their knowledge well and use it effectively to keep themselves and others safe.

Managers take clear and deliberate steps to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

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