

Rapid Improvement Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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.

Rapid Improvement Limited was founded in 2007 as a health and social care agency service and accredited training provider. The company gained a direct contract in December 2017 to offer apprenticeships in adult care, early years and business administration. At the time of inspection, 84 apprentices were on adult and healthcare standards, 69 on business administration standards, six on team leader and supervisor standards and 159 on early years frameworks. Rapid Improvement Limited recently gained a contract from the Greater London Authority for learners funded by the Adult Education Budget. This provision is too new for inspectors to gather sufficient evidence to form a progress judgement.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers do not design or plan programmes that meet the expectations of standards-based apprenticeships. Programmes focus too much on achieving qualification units rather than developing apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours. Leaders do not involve employers to ensure that they plan programmes around employers' business needs and the individual skills needs of apprentices.

Apprentices and employers do not receive clear information and guidance at the start of the apprenticeships about how the programme is organised and assessed. As a result, many are unsure of what they need to do and when they will complete it. In particular, the first cohort of adult care apprentices were unaware of the requirements of the end-point assessment and have decided not to complete this element.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices receive any preparation for their end-point assessments. To date, none of those who have completed the training phase meet the requirements to go forward to the assessment. They are not

receiving the support they need to complete. Many of the business administration apprentices are demotivated as a result of discovering that they need to undertake additional work on their portfolios.

Managers and coaches do not have an effective oversight of apprentices' progress. Their tracking of apprentices' progress focuses too heavily on unit completion rather than on recording the development of apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours. Early years apprentices use an online portfolio in which they demonstrate progress through detailed reflective accounts.

Rapid Improvement Limited enables non-levy employers in health and social care and early years across greater London to access a wide range of apprenticeships. Following sustained growth in numbers, leaders now recognise the need to improve the quality of their provision. They make good use of consultants to provide external oversight. They have recently strengthened the management team by appointing experienced staff who bring about improvements, particularly in the early years apprenticeships.

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

Leaders and managers fail to ensure that apprentices receive frequent high-quality off-the-job training. Planning is disorganised and causes miscommunication between coaches and apprentices about when and where training is due to take place. This disrupts learning and slows progress. Apprentices' records of the off-the-job hours they complete are unreliable. Consequently, it cannot be shown that they receive their full entitlement.

Coaches do not adapt the length or curriculum content of programmes to reflect the needs of more knowledgeable apprentices. In a few cases, apprentices are on a level that is too low. Those who self-assess as being confident in the required competencies at the start of their programme are right to feel that they unnecessarily repeat tasks in which they are competent.

Managers have implemented an ineffective delivery plan for teaching functional skills. This does not allow sufficient time for all apprentices, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, to develop the skills required to pass their examinations. Many are taking longer than they should to achieve these qualifications.

Coaches do not always use progress reviews with apprentices to develop their knowledge and understanding of their sector. The targets they set apprentices are vague or repetitive and do not focus apprentices on mastering a skill or consolidating knowledge.

Apprentices value the individual and pastoral support they receive from coaches and staff. Coaches work flexibly around employers' business demands and adapt the times when they schedule coaching sessions. Staff support apprentices in dealing with workplace issues, for example by negotiating working hours to accommodate an apprentice's physical disability.

Higher-level apprentices clearly articulate the management skills they develop. For example, they confidently represent their employers at public forums, chair staff meetings and supervise staff more effectively as a result of their training.

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

Leaders and managers have put in place effective arrangements to safeguard apprentices. All staff undergo Disclosure and Barring Service checks to the level required for working with younger learners. They receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding learners and include this as a standing item at management team meetings.

The experienced designated safeguarding lead has ensured that appropriate policies covering safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty are in place, including a referral process. To date, no referrals have been made that test that this works effectively.

Apprentices receive information on safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values at induction. In a few reviews, coaches reinforce apprentices' awareness. Apprentices in early years and healthcare settings recognise signs of abuse and understand the need for child and client safety. However, they are unable to explain the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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