

Empowerment Centre, Training and Consultancy Service Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Gayle Saundry, 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.

Empowerment Centre, Training and Consultancy Services Ltd is an independent learning provider based in London. The provider first received funding in 2017 to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships. It has nine apprentices on the adult care worker level 2 standards-based apprenticeship, five apprentices on the lead adult care worker level 3 standards-based apprenticeship and five apprentices on the associate project management level 4 standards-based apprenticeship.

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 have not planned or delivered an effective curriculum. As a result, apprentices have not gained significant new knowledge, skills or behaviours.

Leaders do not ensure that the requirements of an apprenticeship are met. The majority of apprentices are not paid for their time spent in off-the-job training, and commitment statements do not create an understanding between the provider, the apprentice and the employer.

Leaders do not conduct appropriate initial assessment and recruitment of apprentices. As a result, two thirds of apprentices have left the programme. It is not clear that the apprentices who remain are on a programme which is suitable or challenging for them.

Managers do not adequately track the progress of apprentices. Their assignments are not assessed against merit or distinction criteria, and no achievement targets are set. Trainers do not use the outcomes of assessments to adapt the curriculum based on the needs of apprentices.

Managers do not systematically track the attendance of apprentices to training sessions. Leaders do not have high expectations for attendance and do not know

which apprentices are not attending regularly.

Apprentices do not receive adequate preparation for their end-point assessments. No apprentices have successfully completed their qualification, even though they were due to do so many months ago.

Leaders and managers do not take a systematic approach to self-assessment or quality improvement. As such, significant areas for improvement, such as safeguarding, have not been identified quickly, nor have plans to improve been put in place.

Leaders have an ambition to train individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain qualifications that offer them a greater range of future opportunities.

Leaders have correctly identified that issues with the recruitment process from their sole employer have contributed to poor retention of apprentices. As a result, leaders have ceased to recruit further from this employer.

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

Managers do not adequately tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of apprentices. The curriculum is not planned or sequenced beyond the assessment criteria, to consider the needs of apprentices' job roles.

Apprentices do not receive continuity in their training. All programmes have been taught by multiple trainers and on several occasions no trainer was present at a training session. Trainers have not delivered taught sessions to the majority of apprentices for the past four months, even though no apprentices have yet been through their end-point assessment.

Trainers provide poor-quality feedback on apprentices' work and during their reviews. In written work, trainers write comments such as 'well done', even when work needs to be improved. As a result, apprentices do not know how to improve their work. Reviews are not conducted with both apprentices and line managers present. As a result, opportunities to plan for apprentices to practise what they have learned in their training are missed. Records of reviews contain descriptions of activities apprentices have done but no evaluation of what they have done well or how to improve further.

Managers made inadequate use of initial English assessments. As a result, some apprentices do not have sufficient English skills to complete assignments successfully. No apprentices have gained their target level 2 English qualification. While they used to receive discrete English lessons to support their development,

these no longer take place.

Managers have not done enough to embed the development of mathematics into the curriculum. Managers do not track the development of mathematics skills or identify areas for improvement. As such, apprentices are not supported to develop the skills they are missing to do their job well. No apprentices have gained their target level 2 mathematics qualification.

Trainers and assessors have appropriate qualifications and vocational experience to deliver their training.

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

Leaders and managers have not created a culture of safeguarding. Staff and governors have not received adequate safeguarding training to equip them to safeguard their apprentices.

Apprentices do not receive appropriate health and safety training at the start of their apprenticeship. This is critical as apprentices are often lone workers providing physical care to vulnerable adults.

Leaders do not keep adequate records of the pre-employment checks they have completed for their staff and volunteers.

Leaders have recently completed a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan. However, identified actions are yet to be taken. Leaders are not aware of the radicalisation and extremism risks that apprentices may face due to the areas in which they work and the roles that they perform. As such, apprentices are not made aware of how to identify and protect themselves against these risks.

The designated safeguarding lead is appropriately trained for their role.

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