

Inspection of Louise Setton

Inspection dates: 9–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Apprenticeships **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Louise Setton (iCount) is an independent learning provider based in Manchester. It started to deliver apprenticeships in April 2017. At the time of the inspection, 81 apprentices were on standards-based apprenticeships. Fifty-three apprentices follow the assistant accountant standard-based apprenticeship at level 3 and 28 apprentices follow the professional accounting/taxation technician standards-based apprenticeship at level 4.

iCount has training premises in the centre of Manchester and provides apprenticeships in collaboration with employers across the north west of England. The provider does not subcontract any provision to external organisations.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices have high expectations and a good understanding of how they will develop the knowledge that they need to have successful careers in the financial sector. For example, level 3 apprentices learn how to analyse clients' bank accounts, receipts and invoices in the preparation of management accounts and tax returns. They consolidate their skills in the workplace through constant practice of what they learn.

Apprentices benefit from a high level of support and technical training from coaches and tutors. They appreciate the professional and approachable staff with whom they work. Their training is enjoyable and well structured, with high-quality resources that encourage apprentices to develop independent learning skills.

Apprentices use their understanding of equality and diversity issues and adjust workplace activities to meet the needs of different client groups. For example, apprentices adjust the timings and locations of appointments in response to clients' needs.

Apprentices have a thorough understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, including how it relates to them personally and the potential impact in the workplace. They are aware of the threats of extremism and understand the need to be vigilant as a result of local incidents such as the bombing of Manchester Arena. As a result of the training that they receive, apprentices have a heightened awareness of financial exploitation and money laundering as a way of funding terrorism.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Apprentices develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to make a positive contribution to their employers' businesses. For example, they learn how to conduct effective client meetings. They frequently use commercial software packages to develop skills that enable them to support clients in improving their confidence and ability to use this software to produce their tax returns.

Leaders and managers have a clear intent for the provision of accountancy apprenticeships to support employers in the north west of England. Leaders and managers use their extensive experience in the financial services to good effect. They work effectively with employers to develop and plan apprenticeship programmes that meet the needs of the local area.

Tutors and coaches have up-to-date industrial knowledge and experience. They use this well to provide apprentices with high-quality training. Tutors and coaches benefit from helpful continuous professional development. For example, coaches are supported to undertake a level 3 coaching qualification. As a result, they support apprentices well to plan and prioritise their workplace knowledge and skills development.

Managers monitor the quality and performance of staff successfully. They follow rigorous processes to check the quality of training and support that apprentices receive. Managers have a clear and accurate overview of the progress that apprentices make in developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours. When apprentices fall behind, managers act swiftly to ensure that coaches put in place plans to help apprentices to catch up.

Apprentices benefit from highly effective advice and guidance. Before joining the programme, they receive detailed information on the content of the programme. Apprentices fully understand what is expected of them and their employer.

Apprentices receive consistently good feedback from tutors and coaches, who accurately identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge and skills and put in place a range of helpful support strategies. These include one-to-one meetings with apprentices, webinars, extra workshops and access to high-quality online resources. Consequently, most apprentices pass their examinations and progress on to more complex tasks in their jobs. For example, NHS apprentices study management accounting theory that enables them to provide better budget forecasting for hospital departments.

Apprentices develop their technical knowledge and vocabulary quickly. Tutors consolidate learning frequently so that apprentices can recall learned knowledge easily. As a result, apprentices understand and correctly use professional terms for different financial sectors.

Apprentices improve their communication skills when talking to clients and work colleagues. For example, apprentices who did not speak to clients directly and relied on emails now speak face to face or by telephone to clients with confidence.

Leaders and managers have not implemented effective plans for the development of English and mathematics skills for the small number of apprentices for whom knowledge gaps have been identified.

Coaches do not always coordinate well enough the links between off-the-job and on-the-job training. As a result, employers are not fully aware of gaps in apprentices' knowledge and skills.

Tutors and coaches do not ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently challenging to develop the knowledge that apprentices need to achieve a distinction at their end-point assessment.

Leaders have been too slow to establish governance arrangements that hold senior managers to account. This was identified at the previous monitoring visit as a weakness. Due to the delay in holding the first board meeting, members have yet to agree their key roles and responsibilities in improving the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have put in place comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding and to meet the 'Prevent' duty. They carry out effective background checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices. They provide staff and apprentices with appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding leads are suitably qualified and experienced. They have effective links with local agencies and the regional 'Prevent' coordinator to support the adaptation of policies to protect apprentices. Apprentices feel safe and they know who to contact at the provider if they have any safeguarding concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the support for apprentices who need to develop their English and mathematics skills.
- Ensure that managers and coaches plan on-the-job training more effectively with apprentices and employers, and provide clear links to off-the-job training.
- Ensure that tutors and coaches develop the curriculum further so that it challenges apprentices to develop the knowledge that they need to achieve a distinction at end-point assessment.
- Implement rigorous governance arrangements that hold leaders to account for improving further the quality of education.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278601
Address	Manchester One Portland Street Manchester M1 3LD
Contact number	01612 286564
Website	www.icountraining.com
Principal/CEO	Louise Setton
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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