

Pentland Assessment Centres Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Steve Lambert, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Address:	Lothian House, 33–41 Kelvin Avenue, Hillington, Glasgow G52 4LT

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. 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 to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Pentland Assessment Centres Limited is a training provider based in Glasgow, Scotland. It has received funding directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency through the apprenticeship budget since 2018, and it is this provision that is in scope for the monitoring visit. In 2018/19, the provider had 14 apprentices funded through this route. At the time of the inspection, 32 apprentices in England were on level 3 information technology and telecoms framework apprenticeships and level 4 project management, team leading and business administration apprenticeship standards.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a clear vision and ambition for their curriculum. They aim to improve the knowledge and skills of workers in telecommunications and project management. They achieve this through high-quality apprenticeship training and are prudent with their plans to grow the provision. Leaders and managers work closely with employers to put in place apprenticeship programmes that support individuals to gain the knowledge they need to work in this sector.

Staff work with employers to recruit apprentices who will benefit from learning new knowledge and skills. Most apprentices stay to the end of their course. A high proportion of apprentices achieve qualifications in English and mathematics.

Leaders and managers have secured a high level of commitment from employers to the apprenticeship programme. The employers' own staff help to teach apprentices the technical skills they need for the apprenticeship and their job role.

Leaders and managers have a realistic picture of the overall strengths of the apprenticeship programme and the areas for improvement. They are aware of what areas need to be improved and take action to rectify these. For example, following their reviews of assessors' performance, they do not provide enough feedback to

assessors to help them improve. Leaders have recently implemented a process to gain independent scrutiny of the provision. This is still in its infancy, and the impact cannot yet be measured.

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 have recruited staff with the appropriate experience and qualifications in the subject areas being offered. Apprentices receive good support from assessors to develop new knowledge and skills. Staff identify accurately what their apprentices know and can do at the start of their apprenticeship. They then place apprentices on the correct programme.

Apprentices are taught new knowledge that benefits their employers. For example, project management apprentices know how to manage large and complex projects, and telecoms apprentices learn how to diagnose faults on telephone lines. As a result, apprentices develop competencies that make them more productive in their jobs.

Assessors keep a close eye on how well apprentices are doing through frequent reviews. Apprentices find their studies challenging and they know how this will help them in their jobs. As a result, they are motivated to learn and plan to seek further study and development opportunities when they complete their apprenticeships.

For telecoms employees who are new to the job, staff structure the training logically. Apprentices first learn workplace behaviours and the basics they need to work as a telecoms engineer, before learning more complex disciplines such as working with fibre-optic cables.

A very small number of telecoms apprentices do not routinely receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. As a result, they are not having the time given to them to complete their apprenticeship.

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders, managers and staff have created an environment where apprentices feel supported. They have appropriate policies and procedures in place which outline in detail the risks apprentices may face and the actions staff should take. Staff are trained in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and know what to do should a concern be raised. The designated safeguarding lead has not completed the necessary training to the appropriate level. However, at the time of inspection, this was imminent.

Apprentices feel safe and know to whom they should report any concerns. Apprentices have a good understanding of topics such as victimisation and harassment. They understand the importance of respecting people's differences and treating people fairly, especially when working in other people's homes. Apprentices are suitably informed about how to keep themselves safe from the risks posed by extremism and radicalisation.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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