

Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2539278

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Inspection dates: 4-5 March 2020

Type of provider: Employer

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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.

Worcestershire Health and Care Trust delivers its apprenticeship through a team called 'Shine' to its current employees, and at level 2 for newly recruited apprentices. During the inspection visit, Shine had 36 apprentices in learning. Of these, 13 were on frameworks, with seven at level 2 and six on level 4 in business administration. Of the remaining 23 apprentices, 10 were on level 3 business administration standards and nine on team-leader level 3 standards. Four apprentices on customer service apprenticeship standards at level 2 started their learning in January 2020. All apprentices have the required qualifications in English and mathematics before the start of their programmes. Apprentices receive support and assessment from a team of 10 assessors, and in addition access a range of learning that is available from within the trust.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

The trust has a clear vision to develop its workforce, focusing on retention, recruitment and succession planning through committed and well-trained team leaders/managers. Apprenticeship programmes at all levels open up careers opportunities in the NHS for the apprentices.

The executive board members in the governance role provide support and challenge to the Shine management team. The newly appointed head of workforce transformation has conducted a thorough internal review of the provision and is aware of the work ahead. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of the changes she has made.

Staff recruit most apprentices to the right programmes that meet their expectations, aptitude and career aspirations. Assessors offer ample advice and guidance and practical help, including signposting to apprentices to apply for jobs in the trust or beyond.

The Shine staff and managers have not developed an effective strategy to plan, deliver and coordinate high-quality, on- and off-the-job training. Therefore, they have not been effective at implementing the ambitious curriculum. Staff do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to do so and to manage the change from frameworks to standards.

The Shine team has not prepared apprentices for the end-point assessment at a sufficiently early stage. This means that apprentices will be late by at least four months in achieving their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers do not have a strategy to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge in English and mathematics beyond their starting points.

Apprenticeship programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Most apprentices receive their entitlement to 20% off-the-job learning, but managers do not have a reliable system for recording this.

Managers track the progress of apprentices and are aware of their progress. Most apprentices on business administration standards at level 3 and level 4 frameworks are making slow progress. Apprentices at level 2 make good progress and move into job roles at the end of their apprenticeship.

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

Assessors do not work closely enough with apprentices' line managers to identify accurately the existing knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprentices. This prevents them from devising a challenging individual learning and training plan. Most of the apprentices at levels 3 and 4 have worked for several years in their job roles and have not done any formal academic learning in recent years. In the absence of an accurate starting point, it is impossible to measure precisely how much apprentices have developed their knowledge, skills and behaviour.

Assessors do not provide enough teaching of knowledge for apprentices. The ongoing support for apprentices to develop study skills to complete assignments has been slow and insufficient. Assessors do not provide precise guidance in good time on completing the assignments. This means that apprentices do not fully understand what is required of them. The most motivated apprentices learn independently from the internet and a range of learning opportunities from within the trust. This does not suit all apprentices' needs.

Assessors focus on verifying and assessing existing skills, with only limited stretch and challenge for apprentices on programmes in business administration at level 3 and level 4. The standard of apprentices' written work is not of a high quality.

Assessors' feedback on apprentices' work is focused on the presentation of information and referencing and does not provide a detailed enough evaluation of the quality of the work. Apprentices are not challenged to excel in developing their knowledge and to produce higher-level work.

Assessors make improvements to the quality of training in response to feedback from line managers and apprentices. However, they do not adopt a proactive or systematic approach to identifying opportunities to improve apprentices' experience.

The standards of written work of apprentices on level 3 standards are high. For example, one apprentice devised a project on reducing waste in dietetics teams, including packaging, recycling, and ordering of goods and services. Such projects are valuable for the trust and make a difference.

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

Safeguarding the health and welfare of the patients and staff, including apprentices, has an appropriately high priority. A culture of safeguarding permeates throughout the organisation, and apprentices feel safe. The policies and procedures for safeguarding are comprehensive. Staff have a high level of awareness of dangers in society. They know the local risks, such as 'county lines'. Apprentices are aware of a range of support networks within the trust, such as occupational health and 'buddies'. They know how to protect themselves and spot signs of vulnerability among their peers, and who to contact if needed.

Managers conduct rigorous background checks on all staff and new recruits. The trust leaders and managers are part of the extensive network of agencies for help, support and referrals. However, apprentices have only a basic awareness of the dangers associated with e-safety and bullying and harassment, and how to protect themselves from these risks.

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