

# Lean Education and Development Limited

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1276379

**Name of lead inspector:** Martin Ward HMI

**Visit date(s):** 30 September – 1 October 2020

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Interim visit

### Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of students and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below. We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

### Information about the provider

The most recent inspection of Lean Education and Development Limited (LEAD) took place in December 2019.

LEAD is an independent training provider specialising in delivering apprenticeships in business improvement techniques for learners aged 19 and over. Most apprentices work at levy-paying employers in a variety of sectors, such as manufacturing, logistics, engineering, automotive and healthcare services. There were 318 apprentices on roll at the time of the visit.

Exactly 176 apprentices were on the level 2 framework apprenticeship and 23 were on the level 2 standard for lean manufacturing operatives. Around 100 apprentices were on the level 3 improvement technician standard, and 18 were on the level 4 improvement practitioner standard. LEAD works with more than 60 employers located across the country.

The provider does not use subcontractors.

### **What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?**

Senior leaders described how employers had furloughed a high proportion of apprentices. Leaders said that they had placed some of these apprentices on a break in learning.

Senior leaders have maintained the existing range of apprenticeship courses. They have invested in an online tracking system to monitor the progress of apprentices.

This has enabled them to identify apprentices' progress, and the support they needed.

Leaders and managers described how they tried to communicate with employers and apprentices during the early months of the pandemic. Success varied between sectors. They found it more difficult to maintain communication with apprentices who did not have access to technology at home.

Leaders and managers talked about how they have used the flexibilities in the external assessment systems to enable some apprentices to complete their qualification. Managers reported difficulties in completing assessments for functional skills due to the invigilation regulations set by the awarding body. This had delayed completion of the apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers explained how they have supported the small number of apprentices who have special educational needs. Specialist coaches had given individual support for functional skills.

Leaders described the guidance they have produced for employers and apprentices, as businesses returned to work. They have reinforced their expectations in relation to on-the-job and off-the-job training. They have moved on-site problem-solving activities to the end of the course. They anticipate that group-based, face-to-face activities will be easier to manage in the future.

Leaders and managers were continuing to develop online learning resources. They stated their intentions to invest in an online system for apprentices' portfolios. Leaders and managers felt in a stronger position now to react to any re-imposition of COVID-19 restrictions.

### **What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?**

Managers and coaches have changed the way they deliver training. They said it was mostly online, using virtual classrooms and webinars. For the few apprentices with limited access to information technology, coaches indicated that learning materials were posted to them, with coaches providing support over the telephone.

Coaches and managers reported that apprentices now receive more regular and frequent contact. They stated that online learning and coaching sessions for apprentices at levels 2 and 3 are now provided in smaller 'bite-size' events and repeated at different times of the working week. Recent feedback from apprentices has been positive.

Leaders have provided a range of professional development activities to support the move to online delivery of learning. Coaches have developed their own training materials, which demonstrate how to use technology and software to aid learning.

Coaches are now more confident in their ability to deliver online training to apprentices.

Managers and coaches described how apprentices completed extended assessments on their return to work. Coaches said that this enabled them to identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge, and to develop and implement individualised learning plans. These plans were often quite different from the plans established prior to COVID-19 restrictions.

Managers and coaches said that the assessment of apprentices' practical skills was challenging. In some cases, coaches had moved this aspect of the apprentices' programme to the end of the course, when they expect access to the site to be more extensive and stable.

Managers talked about how they have worked closely with employers to understand the impact of the pandemic across a range of industry sectors. They explained how they have worked with employers to adapt the careers guidance provided to apprentices.

### **How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?**

The designated safeguarding lead has undertaken additional safeguarding training.

Leaders have provided training for coaches. Coaches outlined how this training included matters such as the dangers of online fraud, and how to use social media safely. They have included these topics in their regular tutorials.

Leaders described how they completed risk assessments for apprentices who are vulnerable and acted to meet their specific support needs.

Leaders told inspectors that they had identified which apprentices were working from home and which apprentices were using employer-based resources. Leaders and coaches said that they were providing guidance to apprentices on how to manage personal risk when learning online through live, web-based conference calls.

Apprentices told inspectors that they felt safe when at work and when working with coaches. Apprentices indicated that they know whom they should contact if they need help and support.

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