

Beacon Education Partnership Limited

Interim visit report

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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 learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. 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

Beacon Education Partnership Limited (Beacon) is a small independent learning provider based in Camden, London. In 2015, Beacon gained a direct contract to teach adult learning programmes funded by advanced learner loans. Beacon provides health and social care courses for employees and learners from small to medium-sized care companies and local communities. Beacon delivers these courses across a wide geographic area including London, Bristol, Leicester, and Birmingham. At the time of the interim visit 131 learners were studying the level 3 diploma in the principles of health and social care, and six learners were studying the level 3 diploma in health and social care (adults) for England.

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 say that the impact of the pandemic in disrupting their courses has been minimal. This is because they had a custom-built online learning platform already in place and in use for online teaching. They also have video conferencing facilities that they use to teach part of their courses online to their learners across England.

Many learners became disadvantaged when their community-based classrooms had to shut. This was because these learners did not have access to computer technology at home. Leaders and managers overcame this by providing paper-based course materials and assignments by post, and by conducting tutorials with learners through phone calls and mobile phone video conferences. Learners can also submit their assignments by post to their tutors.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that some learners are at risk of not completing their course by the agreed date. Teachers have had problems going into care homes to assess learners' practice because of COVID-19. Managers are working with employers to make alternative arrangements. For example, managers and tutors gain consent from the client, the care giver, and the care home manager to observe and assess learners' practical skills through live video-streaming.

Employers report that the transition to online learning was quickly put in place at the outset of the pandemic. As a result, employers say they have not noticed any gaps in learners' knowledge.

Senior leaders are positive that they can grow their business in providing trained professionals for the care sector. Because of the technological adaptations they made to the way they teach their curriculum, learners living in any part of the country can join distance learning courses at any time of the year.

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?

Staff say that online teaching has added to how they can meet learners' needs. This includes being able to teach learners where travel costs or childcare make it difficult for them to attend a class in person.

Tutors believe that adaptations to the timetable for teaching the curriculum give learners more flexibility to learn at a time and pace to suit them. For example, tutors repeat lessons during the week, and hold one-to-one sessions with learners in the evenings and on weekends. As a result, learners with childcare responsibilities, as well as learners with less time because of extra work duties in care homes, are able to keep up with their studies. Managers and tutors report that learners' attendance has improved.

Managers and tutors make weekly telephone calls that help them know if learners are falling behind with their studies. Where this is the case, tutors help learners catch up through going over course content with them.

Leaders adapted the way they check the quality of online teaching during the pandemic. Managers now log on to tutors' online lessons to assess the quality and give them feedback on how to improve.

Managers provide tutors with support to develop their teaching skills by setting up opportunities to observe their peers through online lessons. Tutors say that they would benefit from more training in online teaching skills.

Managers report that they can use specialist staff more effectively through online delivery. Tutors with expertise in dementia, for example, can now teach learners

across the country. Previously they would teach face-to-face in one specific geographical area.

Leaders and managers provide careers advice and guidance through online information. They recognise that they need to give learners information about a wider choice of universities.

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

Leaders recognise the risk to learners' safety in moving to online learning. They believe that their use of a new video conferencing package has improved safeguarding. For example, learners can only access online lessons with an identification code for the session.

Staff and learners receive training in suitable conduct and behaviour for attending video teaching sessions. For example, learners and staff know about the standards for dressing properly if they are on camera. Tutors can remove learners from sessions at any time if behaviour is inappropriate.

Learners are aware of the potential risks of working online. They report identity theft and suspicious websites as being some of the dangers.

Tutors encourage socially isolated learners to chat with each other through informal, online coffee mornings. They say that learners gradually feel better about themselves and become motivated to study.

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