

# Encompass Consultancy Limited

Interim visit report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	1237113
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Steve Hunsley, HMI
<b>Visit date(s):</b>	20 to 21 October 2020
<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Encompass Consultancy Unit 6 Redcliffe Road Melton Melton Industrial Estate East Yorkshire HU14 3RS

## 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

Encompass Consultancy Limited (Encompass) is a private limited company, based near Hull, that was formed in 2009 to provide consultancy and management services to businesses. In 2013, it started to deliver apprenticeships as a subcontractor. In 2015, it began to offer courses funded through advanced learner loans and, in 2017/18, it secured its own contract to deliver non-levy-funded apprenticeships.

Encompass currently delivers a mix of framework and standards apprenticeships, from level 2 to level 5 in management, team leading and procurement. There are currently 352 apprentices on programme. In addition, there are 157 adult learners on provision funded through advanced learner loans in a range of subjects, including beauty therapy and accounting. Encompass works with one subcontractor that provides personal development courses to a small number of adult learners.

### **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 realised at the start of the national lockdown that the teaching of the curriculum would need to change significantly as they try to keep learners engaged in their learning. They changed their approach to delivering the curriculum through expanding the use of online learning. Staff feel well informed and are supportive of the actions that leaders have taken.

Leaders told us that the move to online learning was positively accepted by learners and employers. A few adult learners did not have the use of a laptop or computer and could not access their online learning. In these cases, staff supported learners to draw on any bursaries available which would help them to purchase the necessary equipment.

Staff have worked with learners and employers to adjust the delivery of the curriculum and to fill any gaps in learners' understanding caused by breaks in learning. They have reviewed their curriculum plans and made changes in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Leaders explained that their subcontractors have also moved to deliver their learning online, and returning learners are making good use of laptops or electronic tablets supplied for their use. Subcontractors told us that they found moving to online learning a challenge but recognise its benefits when face-to-face learning is interrupted.

Leaders and managers have become more aware of the mental health and well-being of their learners and staff. They have realised, through their own experience of the pandemic, the increased support that their staff and learners may need going forward.

**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 have received appropriate training to deliver a range of online activity, including online lessons and individual support sessions. They work with learners to overcome barriers, such as working from home, and provide additional pastoral support where needed. Learners report that the move to online learning has worked well and enables them to continue to develop their skills and knowledge.

Staff modified courses to ensure that they could be delivered fully online, while maintaining learners' engagement and interest. Business and functional skills courses are now delivered through shorter, single-topic sessions. In accountancy, staff provide more interactive activities to keep learners engaged. Staff teaching beauty courses brought forward the delivery of the theory elements as it was not possible to carry out practical aspects due to the closure of the industry. Tutors found alternative ways to develop learners' practical skills, such as providing video demonstrations, following which learners carried out nail treatments on display tips at home, which tutors observed remotely.

Staff monitor attendance at online sessions. They follow up absences to ensure that learners are safe and that issues affecting their attendance are resolved.

Many learners had breaks in learning due to the postponement of external examinations, furlough, or not being able to complete all aspects of their course due to industry closure. Staff supported learners through these breaks through regular communication. Learners on accountancy courses had the option, on returning from their break in learning, to continue from where they left off or complete a full refresher programme, recapping what they had learned before the break.

Learners continue to receive careers guidance about potential career routes in their chosen field. In some subjects, this has been extended in recognition of likely future employment needs.

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

Managers ensure that staff receive regular updates, including Webinar resources on staying safe during the pandemic, and that they pass this information on to their learners. Managers recognise that they need to give further consideration to online risks that learners could encounter.

Staff are mindful of the challenges that learners face in their personal lives as a result of the pandemic. They provide learners with support and advice on matters such as difficult family circumstances and the threat of possible redundancy.

Staff identify which learners are at risk and have maintained more contact with these learners during the pandemic than they would normally. When staff have concerns, they report them to the safeguarding officer, who offers helpful support or refers the learners to appropriate external agencies.

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