

Liberty Training

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 144785

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Visit date(s): 14–15 October 2020

Type of provider: Specialist further education college

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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

Liberty Training is part of Liberty Group Ltd, which runs care homes and outreach provision for young people. Liberty Training started trading in 2013 and was registered as an independent specialist provider in 2017. It provides courses for young people with mental health needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Liberty Training was previously inspected in August 2019 and was judged to require improvement.

There are currently 73 learners. Learners study work skills study programmes from level 1 to level 2. Leaders have ceased providing the supported internship programme. This has now been replaced with a level 2 work skills study programme.

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?

Leaders discussed the difficulties caused by the pandemic on planning and teaching a highly personalised curriculum that relied on considerable face-to-face activity. Leaders have increased the length of the programme to six terms to manage social distancing and introduced a level 2 course.

Leaders report a reduction in learners being able to complete work placements because of the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality and retail sectors. They have long-term concerns for learners because of the increasing lack of suitable employment opportunities.

Leaders identified that they had to make adaptations quickly to meet learners' support needs and maintain learners' motivation for their courses. They identified the impact of not being able to undertake trips and activities that provide opportunities to widen learners' interests and skills, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders discussed the development of the curriculum to support learners to develop skills. Teachers are helping learners' study skills such as using information technology, which prepares them well for their next steps.

Leaders described how they use a 'traffic light system' to monitor learners, enabling them to provide personalised support. Learners often have multiple issues, such as anxiety, poverty, literacy- or health-related matters for which tailored support is provided by leaders and teachers. Leaders explained how they use the bursary fund to help learners finance training that helps their next steps.

Leaders described how they agree specific targets for learners. For example, because of increased confidence a learner is now able to enter the classroom and participate in learning with her peers.

Leaders described how teachers and teaching assistants prepared for national COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders provided teaching assistants with laptops and mobile phones to enable them to work alongside teachers to provide remote support for learners. However, levels of learner participation and motivation were low but have since improved.

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?

Tutors contacted learners with previously identified welfare concerns and poor levels of motivation. They told us learners did not have equipment to access the internet and lacked confidence when participating in online learning.

Staff identified the lessons they have learned and how they are supporting learners to develop the skills and confidence to take part in online learning should they need to learn remotely. Leaders plan to purchase additional laptops to enable learners to participate in online learning.

Leaders and tutors described how the pandemic has changed the types of activities they can plan and provide for learners. There are now limited trips and outdoor activities and more classroom-based and simulation activities. Tutors have extended the settling-in period so that they can get to know learners. Staff are acutely aware of the different support needs for each learner and are working hard to meet their needs with different teaching strategies.

Teachers discuss frequent checking of learners and their progress against their individual plans. They review learners' work to identify gaps in learning, provide

supportive feedback and identify any support needs or interventions required to maintain learners' participation.

Leaders described how learners receive careers advice and guidance through an external consultant and their tutors. Learners receive personal guidance that supports them to make informed career choices. They are encouraged to use their free time to study for additional qualifications or participate in additional activities that support them to achieve their aspirations. A learner who aspires to work in the catering industry is working towards additional food hygiene qualifications.

External agencies report that managers and tutors teach a curriculum that supports the development of learners' vocational, English and mathematics skills. Tutors support learners to develop their resilience and find support for their anxiety and mental health needs.

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

Staff know their learners well and understand the difficulties that have affected them and have worsened since the start of the pandemic. Learners have spent time in the classroom learning how to work safely online but have not used these new skills as they are back in the classroom.

Managers and staff review all learners weekly to assess their progress and identify any changes in behaviours which require further exploration or support. Staff keep more-detailed records to monitor and review learners' support needs. These include parents' and guardians' feedback to ensure that support needs are met.

Leaders have increased communication with external agencies, including local police, to keep up to date with changes in local risks, which helps them to support learners. Staff have recently completed training in the use of drug-use screening tools. They use this to assess learners' risks and where appropriate make referrals to external support agencies.

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