

Develop-U

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	58242
Name of lead inspector:	Sarah Lonsdale HMI
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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 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

Develop-U is a small independent training provider based in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. The company provides apprenticeships for large levy-paying manufacturing organisations in the food manufacturing, automotive and pharmaceutical sectors. Apprentices are employed at companies across the country.

There are currently 52 apprentices on programmes, of whom 23 are on improving operational performance frameworks at level 2. Four apprentices are on the level 3 operational quality improvement standard, 13 are on the level 3 team leader/supervisor standard, and seven are on the level 5 operational management standard. Five apprentices on the level 4 improvement practitioner standard are waiting for their end-point assessment.

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 and managers have adapted the apprenticeship curriculum to include online learning. They have worked with employers to provide apprentices with access to computers to enable them to participate in learning. Managers believe that the pandemic has required them to move to online delivery more quickly than planned. However, they recognise the benefits and plan to continue with a more blended approach to teaching.

Managers carried out contingency planning with employers by reviewing the teaching schedule. They plan to bring forward the skills-based components of the apprenticeship to mitigate the risk of delayed assessment in the case of any future pandemic restrictions. Assessors now use online learning workshops to develop

apprentices' knowledge, followed by individual coaching on project work. They then visit apprentices in the workplace to observe the application of their skills.

Managers have worked with employers to help ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. They describe how regular meetings with employers help them to monitor apprentices' progress and ensure that apprentices receive the support that they need.

Managers gather feedback from apprentices, employers and staff to help them evaluate the quality of the curriculum and teaching methods. They have made changes to their delivery of remote learning throughout the pandemic to meet apprentices' needs more effectively. For example, they have reduced the length of online workshops to improve apprentices' engagement. Assessors now deliver shorter sessions and include pre-reading activities, self-study and individual support.

Employers feel that apprentices have continued to develop their knowledge and skills throughout the pandemic. They provided examples of apprentices that have taken on extra responsibility through the management of agency staff. Apprentices have used their knowledge to design induction training for the growing numbers of new recruits.

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 assessors are confident that apprentices have continued to develop their skills and knowledge during the pandemic. Assessors have continued to deliver the knowledge and skills components of the apprenticeship through online learning. They acknowledge that some apprentices have gaps in the development of their behaviours as these are usually developed and assessed in the workplace.

Managers and assessors have adapted the programme to keep apprentices engaged in their learning. Apprentices whose work schedules have prevented them from completing assignments on time have had their programme end dates extended.

Managers work with employers to enable assessors to return to face-to-face delivery on site. Assessors complete employer-specific risk assessments to manage their own and apprentices' safety during visits. Managers give assessors additional time so that they can provide individual support to apprentices returning from furlough and deliver refresher sessions to help them to catch up with any missed learning.

Assessors design and deliver sessions on emotional resilience to help apprentices cope with the challenges of the pandemic in both their work and home lives. They have used apprentices' experiences of managing the increased demand for the products that they manufacture to create learning opportunities. They say that this has enabled apprentices on the team leader programme to use the skills and

knowledge that they have developed to motivate their teams and prioritise increased workloads.

Managers have provided training to assessors in the use of online systems to teach sessions and manage apprentices' learning. They use the online portfolio system to monitor the progress of apprentices and to check the standard of their work. Managers identify concerns about attendance and non-engagement through observation of online sessions.

Managers and assessors have maintained their focus on promoting the future careers ambitions of apprentices. They identify the skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop to secure promotions or take on extra responsibility at work.

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

Apprentices understand to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns. Managers and assessors provide information to apprentices on how to protect themselves from a range of online risks, such as cyber bullying and financial scams. They did not provide any additional training on online safety when learning became remote as they considered that apprentices were already able to identify the risks.

Assessors believe that the use of chat groups and more regular one-to-one contact has helped to improve apprentices' well-being. They describe how apprentices share concerns on group chat, such as when facing the threat of redundancy due to the pandemic. Apprentices appreciate the support and encouragement that they receive from their peers.

Leaders continued to access training in safeguarding during the lockdown period. Staff have attended webinars about the 'Prevent' duty to learn about emerging risks. A member of staff has trained as a mental health first aider to provide additional support to apprentices.

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