

Gloucestershire Enterprises Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Paul James Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 3
Twigworth Court Business Centre
Tewkesbury Road
Twigworth
Gloucester
GL2 9PG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This provider received a monitoring visit under these arrangements and was found to be making insufficient progress against one or more themes.

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 additional monitoring visits to new providers that were judged to be making insufficient progress against one or more themes at their previous monitoring visit and would have been due their full inspection up to or during the interim phase but have not received it because of the suspension of routine inspections. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements as outlined in the [interim phase operational note for further education and skills](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook and is focused on the themes set out below.

Gloucestershire Enterprise Limited (GEL) is a social enterprise based in Gloucester. It was approved to be on the register of apprenticeship training providers in 2018. The first apprentices were recruited in February 2018. GEL has 110 apprentices, studying on standards-based programmes. Of these, 50 were on a level 3 team leader/supervisor apprenticeship, 13 on a level 4 associate project manager programme and 47 on the level 5 operations/departmental manager programme. At the first monitoring visit in April 2019, inspectors judged the provider had made insufficient progress in two themes and reasonable progress in the third.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have developed a curriculum which meets the needs of local and regional employers. Apprentices are employed by large employers such as National Health Service (NHS) trusts and local government, as well as smaller businesses. GEL offers leadership and management apprenticeships that support employers to develop effective succession plans and establish change management programmes. Employers rightly value the new skills apprentices are gaining and the positive impact on their organisations.

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders have evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and made several improvements. Managers now work closely with apprentices and employers to track the amount of off-the-job training that apprentices receive. This ensures that almost all apprentices receive adequate time to complete their studies. In the minority of instances where this is not the case, leaders are taking action effectively.

Trainers, apprentices and employers' complete useful reviews which help apprentices reflect on their progress. Leaders have developed a new quality assurance system, which draws on information from these reviews to give a broad perspective of apprentices' progress.

Leaders have not yet captured fully how well apprentice's off-the-job training complements and builds on their training at work. They are not able to assure themselves that all opportunities to develop apprentices' learning at work are exploited.

Leaders have recognised the need to strengthen their governance arrangements and have established a new advisory board. The board's governors bring business and commercial expertise, as well as highly relevant knowledge of training and education. As a result, the advisory board is well equipped to provide effective challenge to senior leaders. However, while governors are clear about the providers' strengths and weaknesses, it is too early to measure the impact of the new arrangements.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Trainers extend apprentices' knowledge by building effectively on the skills and understanding they have already. Examples include apprentices developing their knowledge of how to manage negotiations successfully by reflecting on previous strategies and developing new ones. As a result, apprentices develop substantial new skills which they use to become valuable and productive members of their work-places.

Trainers tailor the context of the teaching to the apprentices' workplace, which helps apprentices understand and apply the new knowledge that they have gained. For example, training on budget management and finance for NHS staff is related to the specific management responsibilities and structures at the apprentices work environments. At the start of training, managers respond well to employers' requests to re-order the curriculum so that it aligns with their priorities. One employer requested project management training be moved towards the start of the programme so that their apprentices would be better equipped for planned work commitments.

Leaders listen to apprentices' views on how things can be improved and take prompt action. During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, apprentices identified that the online learning system they switched to could be more accessible and engaging. Leaders responded by developing more interactive learning activities.

Apprentices value the training they receive and make good use of it in their workplaces. However, apprentices do not always have enough opportunities to increase their competence and confidence at work because assessors, trainers and employers do not work well enough together on this aspect of the apprenticeship programme.

Senior leaders have established a nurturing environment at GEL. They establish close, professional relationships with apprentices, many of whom are in frontline, key-worker roles. Apprentices appreciate greatly the personal support and careers guidance they receive and describe senior leaders as being caring and invested in their success.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders ensure all staff are suitable to work with apprentices by completing appropriate pre-employment checks. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy are trained and hold appropriate safeguarding qualifications.

All staff undertake training in safeguarding. They use this well to ensure all apprentices benefit from a supportive, well-informed learning environment. Apprentices know how to raise concerns and who to speak to if they feel the need to.

The majority of apprentices work in education and healthcare settings. They have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves and their staff teams safe. Apprentices are confident about how to stay safe online. For example, they know they should not share passwords with others.

Although GEL provides apprentices with training on extremism and radicalisation, they are not always clear about potential local risks. Apprentices would value more focused training on local issues and how to apply it in their workplaces.

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