

Partnership Training Limited

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	1278611
Name of lead inspector:	Ruth Stammers HMI
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Type of Provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Pentland House Village Way Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 2GH

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 students 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

Partnership Training Limited (Partnership Training) is based in Wilmslow, Cheshire. It delivers training across England and specialises in apprenticeships in health and social care, childcare and team leading. Currently, there are around 520 apprentices, studying at levels 2, 3 and 5 on a mix of frameworks and standards-based apprenticeships. The majority of apprentices are enrolled on adult care worker programmes at level 2, and children and young people at level 3.

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?

Partnership Training specialises in apprenticeships related to the care sector. All of their apprentices are in frontline caregiving roles. The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on these apprentices and the provider has been significant in terms of the support required for mental health and well-being, and the need to prioritise essential training swiftly.

Leaders worked alongside employers to ensure that apprentices were competent and confident in essential skills and knowledge at the beginning of the pandemic. For example, they prioritised training and revision of health and safety, infection control and the reinforcement of guidance on specific measures required for sanitising due to COVID-19.

Leaders have liaised with employers and the final assessment organisation, to ensure that apprentices close to completion were able to successfully gain their qualifications. They trained employers on how to supervise exams and worked closely with individual apprentices to enable them to carry out their professional

discussions remotely, using various methods of technology to suit their need and level of digital skills.

Staff feel that there is an increasing level of teamwork and camaraderie among the team, apprentices and the employers they work with. They describe a feeling of 'getting through this together'. Leaders have also worked with employers and charities to connect them together to provide support for each other. An employer they work with has transferred part of their apprenticeship levy allocation to an autism charity. This charity is now able to employ apprentices at a time of desperate need.

Leaders have seen the effect that the pandemic has had on a few apprentices who were new to the care sector. These apprentices felt that they were not best suited to a profession in care and have been supported with alternative careers advice.

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 have adapted the curriculum and the methods of assessment they use in response to COVID-19 restrictions. For example, in residential homes for people with autism spectrum disorder, employers were unable to provide written consent for service users to be filmed in remote observations. In these circumstances, tutors have focused on tasks which can be assessed without service users present, such as handling of medication and food preparation.

Employers say that their apprentices have benefited from learning online and participating in group discussions. Before online learning was introduced, most apprentices worked alongside others from their own care home, whereas now, they have access to a wide range of people who work in different types of residential homes. Apprentices share good practice, such as effective methods of communication when wearing a mask. They are also able to share ideas on putting service users at ease, such as wearing a badge with their photograph on.

Tutors work with apprentices to develop their digital skills. They liaise with employers to ensure that apprentices have access to technology in the workplace or at home. Apprentices value the time tutors have spent with them and have used their improved digital skills in their apprenticeship training and daily lives. They say that they are now better equipped to help their children with homework, pay bills and shop online, and to stay connected to family and friends.

Tutors communicate with apprentices on a regular basis and arrange for them to access learning at times to suit their circumstances. A few apprentices chose to live in the residential homes where they work to limit cross-contamination between themselves, service users and their families. Tutors have worked with these apprentices to ensure that they are supported with their well-being and that they are able to continue to make

progress with their learning. Apprentices say that continuing to learn has been a welcome distraction for them.

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

Leaders have identified additional risks that apprentices, particularly those within the care sector, have faced during the pandemic. They have increased apprentices' training on mental health, stress and anxiety. Tutors describe apprentices who have experienced more deaths of people in their care than they would normally see. Tutors and leaders have provided a 'listening ear' and tips for building resilience, to assist apprentices to come to terms with the situations they are in.

Apprentices' use of the internet has increased significantly since the beginning of the pandemic. Leaders talked about the increasing reports of online fraud and blackmail from their own staff and apprentices. In order to teach apprentices how to protect themselves from this, they commissioned actors to video themselves talking through real-life scenarios. In turn, apprentices are now able to raise awareness with vulnerable service users they work with in their jobs.

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