

The College of Animal Welfare

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 51224

Name of lead inspector: Gerard McGrath HMI

Visit dates: 20–21 October 2020

Type of provider: Not-for-profit organisation

Address: Headland House
Chord Business Park
London Road
Godmanchester
Huntingdon
PE29 2BQ

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. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

Information about the provider

The College of Animal Welfare (CAW) is a not-for-profit company with centres in Cambridgeshire, north London, Yorkshire and Scotland. The college specialises in training for land-based industries. It also offers training and qualifications in accounting, customer service, business administration and leadership and management.

At the time of the visit, the college had 80 apprentices aged 16 to 18, 486 aged 19 and 789 aged 25 years and over. Most undertake apprenticeships in veterinary nursing or animal care.

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 have made the safe continuous provision of the curriculum the focus of their plans and actions throughout the pandemic. They say that they have ensured little or no interruption to the learning programmes.

Prior to the pandemic, senior leaders took the strategic decision to introduce distance and online learning for administration, customer service and management courses. In response to the changing circumstances, they introduced additional resources to provide all courses online. Managers trained staff on the features of the new online platforms, including the use of breakout rooms and live lessons.

During the national lockdown, managers worked with staff to extensively review the curriculum. They agreed to change the order of how they offered the programme. Staff report that they designed innovative ways to help apprentices develop their practical skills. For example, staff have made their own home videos to demonstrate techniques such as how to correctly apply bandages to a range of injuries. Senior managers reviewed staff roles to take account of new ways of working. This included

the need to contact apprentices more frequently and support them to access new methods of learning.

Managers ensured that staff continued to provide tutorial support to the large number of apprentices who have remained in learning beyond the planned end date of their qualification. For example, apprentices on veterinary nursing programmes have been unable to achieve their qualifications and progress to their next steps because they have been unable to take their final exams. These apprentices revise their knowledge and refine their practical skills in anticipation of their final exams.

Senior leaders described their work with awarding bodies to agree new remote examination invigilation arrangements to accelerate achievement of apprentices. Managers are supporting staff to apply these revised assessment strategies. Senior managers worked closely with employers to design smaller group and online sessions that meet these changing requirements.

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?

Leaders and managers state that they have ensured that teams work together more closely across sites to plan and implement learning. Leaders have invested in information and technology systems to enable staff to work from home. Leaders, managers and staff use digital communication such as Microsoft Teams to keep apprentices and employers informed of curriculum changes.

Leaders and managers have provided staff training and support throughout the pandemic. Staff feel confident in facilitating online learning. Tutors use the lesson catcher in e-Streams to record sessions and make use of interactive polls to elicit apprentices' understanding. From this, they identify and take action to remedy any gaps in apprentices' learning.

Leaders and managers have carried out observations of learning sessions to review how teachers are implementing online learning. They provided feedback to staff on how to improve. Senior managers have collected the views of staff and apprentices through regular surveys. They plan to use this feedback to agree staff training and development plans.

Progress coaches and tutors discuss careers and next steps in learning with apprentices during reviews and exit interviews. Senior managers plan to continue with virtual careers sessions. Staff have maintained frequent contact with apprentices at risk of redundancy, on furlough or beyond the planned end date of their learning to provide ongoing help, career advice and guidance.

Apprentices who need extra help with their learning say that they receive individually planned help from tutors and staff. Tutors have increased the frequency of their

contacts with apprentices experiencing high levels of anxiety, to provide help and reassurance.

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

Senior leaders have increased the monitoring of vulnerable apprentices. They report that they have worked with external agencies to provide prompt support for apprentices that they identified as being at significant risk of harm.

Employers and workplace supervisors say that CAW kept them well informed of COVID-19-related risks and associated precautions. All workplace coaches have completed relevant training about e-safety and their safeguarding responsibilities.

Apprentices have completed an e-safety module along with COVID-19 safety training. They say that they are secure in their understanding of what to do to keep themselves safe when online or in training centres.

Apprentices and workplace coaches are confident in their knowledge of how to get advice and guidance, if the need arises. Apprentices say that tutors contact them on a weekly basis to monitor their well-being.

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