

Rita's Training Services

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Helen Whelan Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	40 Westgate Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 7PN

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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

Rita's Training Services (RTS) is an independent training provider based in Sleaford, Lincolnshire. It has been delivering apprenticeships since March 2018. From November 2019, RTS has been part of Agincare Group Limited and a new leadership team has been appointed. At the time of the monitoring visit, 37 apprentices were on standards-based programmes. Of these, 19 were on a level 2 adult care worker apprenticeship and 15 on a level 3 lead adult care workers apprenticeship. Three apprentices are on team leader or business administration courses. A minority of apprentices follow a higher apprenticeship in care leadership and management. All apprentices are aged over 19, and most are female.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

RTS were acquired by Agincare Group Limited to support their strategy to offer high-quality care apprenticeships in the north of the country. The new leadership team has introduced a range of quality assurance processes, including curriculum planners, standardisation meetings and lesson observations. However, these are not having enough impact on the standard of training apprentices receive. The effects of the pandemic on the care sector has made the situation more difficult to manage.

The principles and requirements of an apprenticeship are not being met. Although managers work with employers to ensure that apprentices have enough time off the job to complete their training, too many apprentices do not receive this entitlement. Apprentices either spend time at home completing their studies or they fall behind. Where apprentices do receive training, it is unclear how this links to their job role or builds on their prior learning.

Teaching and learning coaches (coaches) have specialist knowledge of the adult care sector but lack the teaching skills to effectively develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. Managers have identified the gaps in coaches' teaching skills but have not yet remedied this. For example, coaches' poor information and communication technology skills hinder their ability to teach online. As a result, apprentices are making slow progress.

Employers report that the curriculum offered by leaders and managers suits their needs, supports apprentices in their current job role and aids their future progression. Inspectors found little evidence of this. Too many apprentices received little or no training from November 2019 because of leadership and staffing changes. Most of the training apprentices did receive was due to employers providing it in the workplace as part of apprentices' professional development.

Apprentices approaching the end of their course are aware of the final assessment process but are not clear when the final assessment will happen or how they will be prepared for it.

Leaders, managers and those with responsibility for governance know what they need to do to improve the apprenticeship experience, but the actions taken are too slow.

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

Managers do not provide apprentices with well-planned and high-quality off-the-job training, and do not monitor on-the-job training closely enough.

Coaches use their knowledge of the care sector to discuss with apprentices their experiences at work. Although apprentices find this supportive, they do not gain significant new knowledge and skills from their apprenticeship. Many have worked in the care sector for many years and are very experienced. As a result, most apprentices struggle to identify any new learning they have gained from their studies.

Coaches assess apprentices' skills in their job role at the start of their course and use the results to decide which individual units to follow. The results are not used to

develop the wider curriculum. As a result, the majority of apprentices are not given enough opportunities to broaden their skills or behaviours.

Leaders and managers have produced a generic curriculum plan mapped to each apprenticeship standard. They assess against each criterion rather than ensuring apprentices develop a deep understanding of topics. When teaching occurs, coaches typically explain the standards they are covering in a lesson and direct apprentices to complete worksheets. This leads to superficial understanding.

Apprentices do not benefit from frequent progress reviews or clear targets. Too many apprentices are past the date when they should have completed their course, with a minority not on track to achieve. Coaches have recently started to address this, but it is too early to judge the impact.

Apprentices' English and mathematical skills are assessed at the start of their programme. Coaches use the results well and develop apprentices' skills appropriately. As a result, most apprentices make good progress towards their English and mathematics qualifications.

Coaches have recently provided apprentices with useful and supportive feedback on their written work to help them develop further. Coaches monitor apprentices' progress, but apprentices remain behind with their studies.

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

Managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard apprentices. They review and update them annually. Managers ensure that staff are safe to work with apprentices and provide mandatory training in safeguarding and their 'Prevent' duty.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) uses a range of tools to promote the importance of safeguarding across the organisation. This includes monthly newsletters that are sent to apprentices, coaches and employers, and a video streaming channel to raise awareness of a range of safeguarding topics.

The DSL is aware of the local risks that apprentices may face and has devised a comprehensive enrichment calendar to support coaches to embed key safeguarding themes into lessons. This includes a range of issues surrounding equality and diversity, British values and how to keep safe online.

Apprentices know how to report any safeguarding concerns they have. They are also able to apply their knowledge of safeguarding to their work in the care sector.

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