

# Alpha Care Agency Limited

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 58538

**Name of lead inspector:** Saher Nijabat HMI

**Visit date(s):** 28-29 October 2020

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Tottenham Town Hall  
Town Hall Approach  
Tottenham  
N15 4RY

## 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

Alpha Care Agency Limited (ACA Ltd), trading as Alpha Gateway College, is an independent learning provider based in Haringey. ACA Ltd offers courses for 409 adult learners in East, North and South London, all of whom are already in employment. Around 350 learners are apprentices and study level 2 to level 5 programmes in health and social care, childcare, leadership and management and business studies. Another 58 learners are in receipt of advanced learner loans and study level 3 diploma courses in childcare and adult 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 and managers describe that they made a smooth transition to online learning when national restrictions were introduced. They checked that all staff and learners had access to the necessary technologies to complete work online. Assessors received tablets and work phones so they could work from home. They also received training on using online technology to teach.

Leaders have changed the way assessors teach the curriculum to adapt to changed circumstances. Assessors make greater use of recorded professional discussions and witness testimonies where they are unable to carry out workplace observations. Leaders have also started to offer a course in information technology in response to employers identifying skills gaps in this area. Employers and learners report that the current curriculum offer meets their needs.

Learners and employers in the care sector have experienced increased demands at work due to the pandemic. Some learners found it difficult at the start of the pandemic to engage with online learning. However, over time their participation in online learning has improved. Leaders and staff contact learners via phone and use video conferencing to discuss issues affecting their well-being. Although they retained all learners in training, leaders report that their learner enrolments have halved compared to this time last year.

Leaders report that many learners could not complete their training due to national restrictions. They did not hold examinations in mathematics and English as their learners did not have sufficient time to prepare. Leaders have now partially opened centres so that learners can take examinations and final assessments on site. Leaders continue to explore ways that learners can take these online. Assessors prepare learners through one-to-one tutorials and professional discussions online. They plan to develop tutorial videos and an online resource bank to support learners' progress.

**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 have taken steps to ensure learners continue to make progress. For example, learners submit their work online. They use information from the video links shared by their assessors to develop their knowledge. Leaders recognise that moving online has reduced travel, which allows assessors more time to directly support learners. Learners say that during online lessons assessors check their knowledge and understanding regularly to ensure that they have grasped key concepts. As a result, learners report that they are getting the support and help they need to stay on track.

Assessors describe their leaders as supportive. Managers frequently observe online teaching sessions, check the resources assessors use and look at learners' work. They provide feedback to assessors on their practice and technical skills. For example, managers feed back on different ways to draw information from learners. Managers report that assessors are becoming more creative in their teaching by using videos and visual aids to communicate ideas. Consequently, this has led to better learner engagement in lessons.

Assessors identify that the training they have received has helped them to support apprentices better in making progress. For example, they have developed a more in-depth understanding of the requirements of final assessments. As a result, they say they have put in place improved strategies to support apprentices to prepare for these, such as more frequent professional discussions and tests of apprentices' knowledge.

Staff provide careers advice and guidance to learners which is focused on their next job or the right university course for them. For example, learners receive advice on

which courses to do if they want to go from being a carer to becoming a team leader. Leaders report that every year more learners are promoted at work, go on to a higher-level course or go to university.

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

Leaders and staff report that due to more contact with learners during the pandemic, they have developed a better understanding of learners' personal circumstances. They recognise the high risks that their learners face at work, such as infection transmission, loss of clients and redundancy.

Staff provide information, advice and guidance to learners based on their individual circumstances. For example, they have referred learners to the Citizens' Advice Bureau to get help with financial problems.

Leaders keep everyone informed of the safety measures in place for learning online and at their centres. Those who attend in person receive safety kits, including disinfectant spray and their own stationary. Leaders have trained staff on the safe use of online tools for teaching. Assessors share information about the risks of working online with their learners regularly. They discuss the dangers of visiting inappropriate websites. Learners report that they feel safe and looked after.

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