

# Independent Training Services Limited

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 52459

**Name of lead inspector:** Cath Jackson, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit dates:** 10 to 11 December 2020

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Queens Court  
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## 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 learners and apprentices in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Independent Training Services Limited (ITS) is a small independent learning provider located in Barnsley. It has 26 employed staff and engages with around 100 employers. ITS offers a broad range of apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5, including accountancy, health and social care, business administration, management, project management and customer services. It also offers a range of short courses ranging from entry level up to level 5, to prepare adult learners for employment, further education or higher education. At the time of the interim visit, there were 271 apprentices and 87 adult learners, of whom 23 were in receipt of adult learner loans.

### 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 paused face-to-face classroom teaching in March 2020, in line with COVID-19 restrictions. Staff taught learners and apprentices online, with minimal interruption to learning. Teaching centres reopened on a limited basis in July 2020, to enable adult learners to acquire and practise the practical skills that they needed to complete their qualifications.

Leaders believe that using online learning has made it easier for learners to access courses. Managers feel that more flexibility and less travel has widened the appeal of the courses that they offer, and they said that learner numbers have increased as a result. Managers consider that online approaches are efficient and effective. For example, staff have been able to combine groups of learners from different employers and across a wide geographical area, to study mental health awareness and health and safety.

Managers described the steps that they have taken to help apprentices prepare for their assessments. Tutors provided extra sessions, resources and preparation activities to help apprentices catch up if they had fallen behind. Employers told us

that they value the way that ITS managers and staff support apprentices to continue with their learning, particularly in highly pressured health-care contexts. They described how tutors use flexible teaching approaches and maintain close contact to ensure apprentices do not fall behind.

Employers and stakeholders appreciate the way that leaders responded to their business needs during the pandemic. When government restrictions led to entertainment venues closing, many businesses no longer required door or security staff. In response, managers adapted training courses to meet the need for skilled security staff to work at COVID-19 test centres and supermarkets. Staff customised training on mental health awareness and infection control. Employers told us that this has helped their employees to deal with people who are distressed at test sites, and to manage situations where they need to enforce new rules and restrictions.

### **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?**

Managers provided specialist training to prepare tutors to use programmes and resources for online teaching. Tutors who were already confident with online delivery supported and coached their colleagues. Managers believe that tutors adapted well to working with their learners online and are increasingly confident in trying new approaches to teaching. Managers monitor online teaching sessions remotely and work with tutors to develop the quality of their online material. Tutors said that teaching online from home has given them more opportunity to try out creative ways to motivate and engage their learners.

Managers explained that they make regular phone calls to staff to check on their well-being. They use video conferencing platforms to communicate with staff, not only about their work but also for morale boosting activities such as quizzes to combat isolation.

Staff explained that they use careers guidance to ensure that adults and apprentices are on the correct programme for their chosen career. Tutors and managers provide online careers advice and guidance during induction, learning sessions and apprenticeship reviews.

Tutors told us that they work closely with employers and awarding body organisations to find the best way to assess remotely and ensure that apprentices can complete their qualifications. They use remote approaches, including video calls, witness testimonies and employer reports, to assess apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours. Staff received training that allowed them to become remote invigilators so that final assessment processes could go ahead.

Managers consider that the productivity of their staff has improved due to greater use of remote and online learning. Tutors spend significantly less time travelling to locations and, therefore, have more time to communicate with employers,

apprentices and learners. Managers and tutors feel that learners and apprentices are more engaged in their learning as a result and that their attendance is high.

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

Leaders understand the risks that learners and apprentices may encounter because of the pandemic or when studying online. Tutors use up-to-date safeguarding information to support learners to stay safe, particularly during online learning sessions. Tutors monitor how well learners and apprentices are coping with isolation and different ways of learning.

Leaders provide guidance to inform staff, learners and apprentices about how to follow safe practices in learning centres and workplaces. Staff keep learners safe by limiting the number of adults attending at one time. They educate learners about washing their hands, keeping a respectable distance from each other and the importance of wearing masks.

Learners and apprentices said that their tutors support them to stay safe when accessing and using online material and the internet. Learners feel safe when attending their face-to-face lessons or examinations at learning centres. They know who to contact if they have any concerns about their safety.

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