

# St Helens Chamber Limited

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Kim Bleasdale, Her Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Salisbury Street Off Chalon Way St Helens Merseyside WA10 1FY

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

St Helens Chamber was last inspected in February 2020. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

### Theme

**What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, the chamber's board of directors has appointed a new senior leadership team. They have taken appropriate steps to improve most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. However, the pace of improvements has been hindered due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders and managers swiftly examined the effectiveness of the apprenticeships they offered. They quickly identified the apprenticeships that meet local and regional needs. Leaders worked closely with employers to develop a learning journey for each apprenticeship curriculum. The learning journey is personalised to provide clear

information about the order in which apprentices will study the topics and a timeline of when apprentices will complete assessments.

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the apprenticeship provision. They track effectively the progress that apprentices make through regular meetings with training advisers. Training advisers set action plans to help apprentices who have fallen behind in their learning to catch up. In a few cases, training advisers do not involve the employer in plans quickly enough. As a result, these apprentices' progress is too slow.

At the last inspection, it was recommended that leaders and managers should rapidly improve the planning and coordination of on- and off-the-job training for apprentices. Leaders and training advisers now plan the curriculum with most employers for business administrator apprentices. They adapt the curriculum to suit employers' needs. For example, training advisers teach information and communication technology earlier in the programme. This helps apprentices to manage confidently new computer and telephone systems at work. Apprentices complete additional training in using spreadsheets and staying safe online.

Leaders and managers have improved how they use apprentices' assessments at the start of the programme to plan the curriculum. They recently introduced an additional assessment of apprentices' starting points within their e-portfolio. This allows training advisers to plan an individualised curriculum for apprentices. In a few cases, training advisers do not use starting points well enough to plan an ambitious curriculum for apprentices. As a result, apprentices do not make the progress that they should.

Training advisers received training to develop their coaching skills and manage online learning. They confidently use online teaching tools and videoconference technology to teach and train apprentices. They receive training to develop their understanding of standards-based apprenticeships, for example training relating to the end-point assessment process.

Training advisers ensure that they plan and teach the curriculum in a logical order. This helps apprentices to recall what they have been taught. For example, apprentices recall previous knowledge about managing budgets. This helps them to manage finances and costs within a project.

Apprentices regularly reflect on their learning. This helps them to strengthen their knowledge, skills and behaviours at work. They complete work-based projects, such as improving company procedures and information systems. In a few instances, apprentices are not challenged by their training adviser to show a deeper understanding. This is because training advisers do not ask enough probing questions.

Training advisers use a suitable range of learning resources. This helps apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices upload work and

training advisers give them helpful feedback. As a result, they know what to do to improve their work. Apprentices enjoy their learning. They access online learning platforms to suit their home and work commitments.

Leaders and managers have a detailed understanding of the risks to apprentices' health and safety. This includes increased online risks when learning remotely. Leaders provide informative newsletters about phishing, keeping passwords safe and healthy living. Training advisers allow apprentices to learn through remote learning, for example by sending videos to apprentices on topics such as domestic violence.

Since the start of the pandemic, leaders and staff have supported apprentices effectively. They continue this throughout the current restrictions. Training advisers contact apprentices regularly to check on their mental health and well-being. Leaders arrange for apprentices to attend counselling sessions. Apprentices appreciate the support they receive.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- swiftly ensure that all apprentices who have fallen behind make rapid progress towards achieving the required knowledge, skills and behaviours
- ensure that staff use the results of assessments completed at the start of the programme to plan an ambitious curriculum, so that all apprentices make at least their expected levels of progress
- ensure the effective coordination of on- and off-the-job training by involving employers in all subject areas in the planning and development of the curriculum.

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