

# Halifax Opportunities Trust

Progress monitoring report

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| <b>Unique reference number:</b> | 58139                                 |
| <b>Name of lead inspector:</b>  | Cath Jackson, Her Majesty's Inspector |
| <b>Inspection dates:</b>        | 17–18 February 2021                   |
| <b>Type of provider:</b>        | Independent learning provider         |
| <b>Address:</b>                 | Hanson Lane<br>Halifax<br>HX1 5PG     |

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Halifax Opportunities Trust received a new provider monitoring visit in July 2018. At that time, inspectors made progress judgements under three themes.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education and training 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?** **Insufficient progress**

Leaders do not focus sufficiently on ensuring that apprentices are able to develop the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful in their job roles. Assessors place too much emphasis on meeting the competency requirements for qualifications and not enough on developing and recognising apprentices' skills, knowledge and understanding. Tutors do not ensure that apprentices on level 3 standards-based apprenticeships develop their knowledge and understanding of supporting teaching and learning rapidly enough.

In 2020, significant changes in staff resulted in disruption to apprentices' learning, which had a negative impact on their progress. A number of staff left the organisation and were not immediately replaced. During this period, provision of

online learning, which leaders had introduced at the start of the pandemic, was interrupted, which meant that apprentices were often unable to attend online sessions. A few apprentices said that they did not participate in any online learning. Leaders have very recently appointed new managers and tutors, with appropriate experience, to replace staff who have left. Apprentices now feel more positive about the training and support that they are receiving. They have stayed on programme, and most are now joining online learning sessions and, where possible, attending their workplaces in person. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact that new staff appointments have made in accelerating apprentices' progress.

A few apprentices on level 3 frameworks do not know that they are apprentices, and their employers are similarly unaware. These apprentices understand that they are studying for a national vocational qualification to enhance their role with their employer, but have insufficient awareness of the implications or benefits of being an apprentice.

Apprentices receive useful feedback from tutors, with clear guidance on how work could be improved, and tutors pose challenging questions with the intention of helping apprentices to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of their subjects. However, tutors do not ensure that apprentices use this feedback effectively to develop their knowledge further.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear strategy to develop apprenticeships that provide meaningful careers and contribute to building communities. Leaders recognise the need for improvements to apprenticeships and have appointed a new quality team to provide oversight and enhance reporting processes to the board. However, they have been slow to address weaknesses in the existing apprenticeship provision.

Leaders took appropriate strategic steps to enable the business to continue to operate during the pandemic. Classroom and face-to-face teaching ceased in March 2020. Leaders moved resources online and put arrangements in place for tutors to provide remote individual learning sessions and support remotely. Apprentices have benefited from remote support from their tutors and assessors throughout the pandemic in relation to their well-being and mental health.

Employers provide relevant learning opportunities that support apprentices to improve their knowledge of the sectors in which they work. For example, apprentices participate in safeguarding training provided by their employers and in 'train the trainer' sessions. Apprentices are valued highly by their employers and swiftly become an integral part of the team. Assessors and employers encourage apprentices to consider additional qualifications which complement their current job roles and prepare them for their next steps.

Apprentices have a secure understanding of safeguarding as appropriate to their roles working in schools and children's centres. They have a clear understanding of

how to follow safe procedures when working or studying online. Managers ensure that clear processes and procedures are in place for notifying and referring concerns.

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

- ensure that tutors and apprentices focus on the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours so that apprentices can make rapid progress in their roles and chosen careers
- ensure that all apprentices and employers are fully aware of what an apprenticeship entails, so that they value and benefit fully from the opportunities that it provides
- ensure that governors and senior leaders maintain clear oversight of apprenticeship provision and hold managers and employers to account.

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