

# Agility People Services Limited

Monitoring visit report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Charles Searle, Her Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Brunel House Brunel Road Middlesbrough TS6 6JA

## 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 ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Agility People Services Limited is a provider of training and human resources services. It is part of the Unity Limited group of companies. Before securing its own agreement to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships, it was a subcontractor to other providers. It currently has 33 apprentices on programmes. There are 24 apprentices on the team leader and supervisor standard at level 3, four apprentices on the operations/departmental manager standard at level 5, three apprentices on the customer service operational standard at level 2, one apprentice on the customer service standard at level 3, and one apprentice on the business administration standard at level 3. Most apprentices are employed by companies within the Unity Group.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

### Themes

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

#### **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers do not ensure that their programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Too many apprentices are recruited on to programmes without due recognition of their prior work experience or their current roles at work. Some apprentices recruited on to the team leader and supervisor standard already have substantial experience in leadership roles, while others are new into posts without any responsibility for supervising staff. As a result, too many apprentices do not develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Leaders and managers can articulate the strategic purpose behind the curriculum that they offer. However, they have not been able to implement the curriculum successfully to enable staff in small businesses in Redcar and Cleveland to benefit from learning significant new leadership and management skills.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight over the quality of education for apprentices. The board of the group of companies that is responsible for the provider does not receive regular reports on how its apprentices are progressing. They do not know what the provider is good at or what its areas for improvement are. As a result, they do not challenge managers to improve the quality of the provision.

Managers ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. Employers abide by the commitment statements that they sign at the beginning of programmes and provide apprentices with sufficient time to undertake their training while at work.

Managers and assessors monitor the progress of apprentices effectively. They intervene and provide support to those apprentices not making expected progress. For example, they provide intensive one-to-one support and a separate timetable of lessons for apprentices struggling with their English writing skills.

Managers and assessors have the skills and experience to teach apprentices in the vocational areas of business leadership and management. Staff use their experience in the management of human resources to provide effective careers advice to apprentices about their potential next steps.

### **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**

Assessors do not use information about apprentices' existing vocational skills or experience when planning programmes. Apprentices with previous management experience or qualifications complete the same programme as inexperienced apprentices. Consequently, these apprentices only refresh their existing knowledge and do not develop substantial new knowledge and skills.

Assessors do not work effectively enough with line managers to plan opportunities for apprentices to apply their skills in the workplace. A few apprentices do not have line management or mentoring responsibility and therefore are unable to practise their management skills at work.

Leaders and managers do not actively involve line managers in the planning or reviewing of apprentices' programmes. Assessors do not routinely agree training or review progress with line managers to identify how on- and off-the-job training can be organised.

Assessors do not provide sufficient training for apprentices who require English and mathematics qualifications. As a result, the few apprentices that need these qualifications are not being prepared in a timely way for their end-point assessments.

Assessors' approach to assessment is too focused on whether apprentices have completed units of qualifications. It is not used to identify whether apprentices have gaps in their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Apprentices value the support and verbal feedback that their assessors provide. They find discussions about their work helpful in identifying what they can do to improve. For example, apprentices have used lessons about different leadership styles to help motivate their colleagues at work.

Employers state that apprentices' confidence has been boosted due to their training. They observe that apprentices demonstrate behaviours expected of a team leader, such as using their own initiative to plan workloads and volunteering to take on new tasks and projects at work.

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

Leaders and managers have been slow to update their safeguarding policies and procedures to assure themselves that their apprentices are safe. They do not have a clear procedure for reporting safeguarding concerns. They rely too much on informal discussions between members of the small staff team to deal with any concerns that arise.

Managers omitted to include a section on safeguarding in the induction handbook used with some of the current apprentices when they started their programmes. As a result, these apprentices cannot recall what they were told about how to stay safe.

At reviews, assessors routinely ask apprentices whether they feel safe. However, the focus of questioning is on health and safety at work rather than specific safeguarding issues, such as how to stay safe online.

Staff do not keep themselves up to date with the latest developments in safeguarding policy and practice. They have completed online training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

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