

The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation

Monitoring visit report

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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.

The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) is the professional membership body for those working within the revenues and benefits profession. They offer professional training and qualifications to members. In 2019, leaders launched an apprenticeship programme to complement the suite of professional qualifications already offered. There are currently 131 apprentices taking the level 4 revenue and welfare benefits practitioner standard. Apprentices work within local authorities across the country. The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has meant that the majority of provider staff and all apprentices are now working from home. Online training has replaced face-to-face sessions. At the time of the monitoring visit, 19 apprentices are taking a break in learning due to their increased workload associated with the pandemic response. IRRV subcontract teaching for the English and mathematics qualifications to Runway Apprenticeships Limited.

The impact of COVID-19 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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and employers ensure that apprentices receive high-quality training away from their job in line with the apprenticeship requirements. Through the range of activities they complete, such as shadowing colleagues, apprentices deepen their understanding of processes and incidents at work. For example, apprentices observe through their training the role played by their employer at the magistrates' court and the valuation tribunal. This helps them understand how the work they complete contributes to a successful outcome.

Leaders have recruited staff who are industry experts. They offer effective staff development to help them to improve in their training and assessment roles, as well as offering them industry professional development. As a result, staff retain their industry knowledge alongside developing their skills as teachers and assessors.

Leaders work effectively with employers to communicate about the apprenticeship programme and assessment process. As a result, employers understand the progress their apprentice is making towards completion, and they can support them well in their preparations for assessments at the end of the programme.

Leaders undertake appropriate quality assurance to improve the standard of training. For example, they undertake surveys, visit online learning sessions and scrutinise apprentices' assessment work. These arrangements also apply to subcontractors. As a result, leaders have a realistic understanding of the strengths and areas requiring improvement of the provision.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of the provision. They have recently set up a subcommittee to provide a specific focus on the quality of the apprenticeship programme. Consequently, they have started to offer effective support and challenge to leaders.

Leaders recognise that recruitment for early apprenticeship cohorts was not robust enough. As a result, too many apprentices from the first cohorts withdrew from their apprenticeship early. Leaders have recently improved processes to recruit apprentices so that they are clear about the considerable time expectations of the programme. As a result, a higher proportion of newly recruited apprentices stay on the programme.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?

Reasonable progress

Tutors use their expertise well to adjust the curriculum to meet apprentices' needs. Tutors use effective assessments of apprentices' knowledge and experience at the start of the programme to adapt apprentices' individual programmes. For example, tutors focus more on the revenue component of the standard for apprentices who have more experience working in the welfare department. As a result, apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and skills.

Employers work with apprentices to ensure that they put into practice the new knowledge they develop. For example, apprentices working on council tax recovery projects work alongside colleagues in the recovery department. As a result, apprentices get to learn areas particularly relevant to their projects.

The arrangements for teaching qualifications in mathematics and English are effective. Staff develop tailored programmes to meet apprentices' needs based on their knowledge of these subjects at the start of the programme. Tutors integrate mathematics and English teaching into the main apprenticeship programme well. For example, in mathematics, tutors teach apprentices to complete manual calculations

for council tax bands. As a result, apprentices recognise the importance of mathematics and English in their area of work.

Trainers give apprentices good support to prepare for their apprenticeship assessments. For example, in mock professional discussions, apprentices demonstrate their knowledge by answering questions comprehensively. Throughout the apprenticeship, they benefit from helpful feedback that allows them to understand how to improve the standard of their work.

Leaders have not ensured that staff adequately assess apprentices' prior experience at the start of the programme. As a result, they are unclear what behaviours these apprentices need to develop. Apprentices who are already confident in many of the behaviours needed for the standard do not have a clear plan on how they will develop substantially in these areas. As a result, apprentices do not understand their progress in developing work behaviours. Tutors recognise that they need to do more in this area.

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

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding at IRRV. Designated safeguarding leads and staff have attended safeguarding training to help them in their roles. Leaders perform appropriate suitability checks when recruiting staff.

Apprentices feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. They know who they can talk to if they have any concerns. Apprentices understand the risks linked to their work, for example when supporting customers with sensitive disputes that can lead to confrontation.

Apprentices understand the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, they know how to respond if colleagues' behaviours change.

A safeguarding officer has received training in mental health first aid. They now feel more able to provide effective support to apprentices who are struggling with their mental health.

Apprentices do not recall learning about online safety and do not always remember their prior learning on safeguarding topics. Leaders recognise that they need to revisit safeguarding themes more frequently throughout the apprenticeship.

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