

London Cactus Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	1237111
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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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.

London Cactus Limited is a training provider based in north-west London. The provider teaches adult learning programmes and apprenticeships. At the time of the visit, there were 72 learners on programmes funded through advanced learner loans. Most adult learners are on level 3 courses in business and care. London Cactus college had 12 apprentices studying towards apprenticeship standards in health and social care at levels 3 and 5.

London Cactus Limited has taught learners online since the start of their programmes. The pandemic has placed additional pressure on apprentices' workplaces.

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 the apprenticeship programmes meet all the requirements of apprenticeship provision. Apprentices do not receive their full entitlement to training time. The most recent restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 have further reduced the amount of time apprentices spend working towards their apprenticeship.

Assessors do not review apprentices' progress adequately. Where reviews have taken place, assessors rarely involve the apprentices' manager. Apprentices struggle to manage their apprenticeship work alongside their workplace responsibilities. As a result, the majority of apprentices are not making sufficient progress towards completing their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have been slow to introduce support to meet the needs of apprentices. They check apprentices' abilities at the start of the programme, but do not use the information to help design apprentices' learning plans. As a result, apprentices who speak English as an additional language struggle to understand key concepts in lessons as they do not receive any extra support.

Leaders have not fully completed apprentices' agreements and commitment statements, and a minority of statements contain incorrect information. Leaders have introduced systems to help monitor the progress of learners; however, staff and apprentices do not use these effectively. As a result, managers do not have an accurate overview of apprentices' progress.

Leaders have established quality assurance procedures, which they use to identify areas for improvement, but these are not sufficiently effective. For example, they recognise that a minority of staff do not yet understand the apprenticeship standards fully. Leaders also recognise that they do not have any form of governance to provide support and external scrutiny of the work of the company.

Leaders have selected a suitable range of apprenticeship programmes to meet the training needs of employees at a care agency. Tutors provide apprentices with clear information about the opportunities and potential careers available to them on completion of the apprenticeship. Apprentices gain the confidence to perform well at work and have taken on additional responsibilities and progressed into new roles.

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

Apprentices make markedly slower progress than expected through their programmes. This is particularly evident for apprentices on level 3 programmes. Level 5 apprentices have been able to complete work, but are still behind. Leaders have not implemented action plans quickly enough to help learners get back on track with their learning and their entitlement to training time.

The vast majority of apprentices do not receive sufficient time to complete their assignment work. They do not complete follow-up activities set after teaching sessions to help them remember what they have learned. Apprentices are not always able to attend teaching sessions. They often need to leave part-way through due to work commitments. Tutors record sessions for apprentices to help mitigate missed learning. However, apprentices struggle to find time to revisit the learning, other than during breaks or in their own time.

Leaders have recruited skilled apprenticeship tutors who are knowledgeable and well qualified. They give apprentices useful examples that help them use new approaches to challenging situations at work, such as using different techniques to communicate with clients who have had a stroke.

In online lessons, tutors hold discussions about complex topics and encourage apprentices to reflect on their own practice. They use appropriate strategies to see how confidently apprentices can give answers to competency-based questions. They follow up with good examples to ensure that apprentices understand a range of workplace scenarios.

Tutors teach apprentices new knowledge and skills that help them to perform more confidently in their roles. For example, apprentices take on a more active role in meetings and put forward ideas rather than being over-reliant on their managers.

The majority of apprentices are not clear about whether they are working towards English or mathematics qualifications as part of their apprenticeship. Tutors have held discussions with apprentices on these subjects at reviews, but these discussions are not frequent enough for apprentices to retain their learning.

<p>What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals?</p>	<p>Insufficient progress</p>
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Leaders and managers do not structure the adult courses to fulfil the requirements of the programme. For example, learners only attend the course for between three and four hours each week for a total of six months. This is substantially lower than the recommended total course hours stipulated by the awarding body. In planning how they will teach the curriculum, tutors do not include all the requirements of the course specifications.

Tutors do not set or monitor targets for learners. They do not identify accurately why learners wish to study a particular programme, or how the programme might fit with learners' longer-term career or personal goals. They rarely revisit learners' plans to gauge the progress that the learners make towards achieving their longer-term goals. As a result, learners do not have any detailed insight into the progress they make.

Managers recruit too many learners onto programmes who do not have the necessary level of English to maximise their chances of succeeding on the programme. In lessons, a high proportion of learners struggle to grasp more complex concepts and do not demonstrate spoken or written responses at the appropriate level. A significant amount of written work submitted by different learners is identical. Tutors accept the work at face value, without verifying that learners have completed the work themselves.

Tutors do not make learners aware of the potential for them to achieve above a pass grade. Most tutors' feedback does not guide learners to improve their work and achieve higher marks. Learners are unable to explain how the feedback they receive from tutors helps them improve their work and develop further. All learners so far have only achieved pass grades.

Many learners cannot explain in sufficient detail the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they acquire on the programme. While they speak positively about their experience on the programme, they cannot explain how they will use what they have learned in their jobs or for further study.

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

Leaders and managers have developed and implemented the necessary policies and procedures associated with safeguarding. The safeguarding lead and deputies have attended suitable safeguarding training and understand how to refer any concerns to external agencies.

Apprentices and adult learners feel safe in learning and when working. They know whom to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns. Care apprentices are knowledgeable about safeguarding policies they need to adhere to, for example when lone working.

Managers carry out suitable pre-employment checks on staff. Staff receive suitable safeguarding training, including in the 'Prevent' duty, and are familiar with the safeguarding procedures.

A minority of adult learners have only a general understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. While both adult learners and apprentices cover this in induction, they rarely revisit these topics later in the programme.

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