

Bridgeway Consulting Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Bob Hamp, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Employer
Address:	Bridgeway House 2 Riverside Way Nottingham NG2 1DP

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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

Bridgeway Consulting Ltd registered its first cohort of apprentices in 2018. The company currently employs six apprentices. All apprentices study level 2 rail engineering operative and are over the age of 18.

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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers ensure that the programme meets the full requirements of an apprenticeship and that apprentices undertake the core learning required of a rail engineering operative. Apprentices are paid significantly above the national minimum rate and are guaranteed a full-time position on completion of their studies.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices are recruited with integrity. All apprentices are aware of the working conditions and the need to work at weekends and evenings before committing to the apprenticeship. They are appointed individual mentors, who provide well-being advice and ensure that safe working practices are understood and maintained.

Trainers are well qualified and mentors are highly experienced rail engineers. The curriculum is well structured and apprentices are clear about their programme of study. They are aware that the skills, knowledge and behaviours they develop are valued and that they are highly employable when qualified. Most apprentices aim to have a long career in the industry.

Resources available to apprentices are excellent. Apprentices develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours using the Rail Innovation Development Centre (RIDC) track facility. This provides a safe off-the-job learning environment for apprentices. They are able to swiftly join teams of experienced engineers working on Network Rail track repairs, and make positive contributions under their expert supervision.

Leaders have begun to develop a system for formally recording and monitoring apprentices' progress, but this is not yet fully established. Apprentices have a reasonable understanding of how they will be assessed and most feel well prepared for the end-point assessment.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme and are aware of the need for independent oversight of the business. They are currently in the process of strengthening governance arrangements.

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

Trainers use initial assessment results to plan training and build on existing vocational skills or experience. Consequently, apprentices make good progress from their starting points, as basic practical skills acquired in other trades are built upon.

Appropriate arrangements are in place for supporting English and mathematics. The development of apprentices' mathematical skills is particularly good. However, feedback on written work is often cursory and does not tell apprentices how they can do better.

Apprentices understand the need to gain their personal track safety card and individual working alone certificate to work on the Network Rail infrastructure. This provides the incentive to achieve these early in their studies, before moving on to more practical skills development.

Trainers and mentors are keen to ensure that apprentices have a good understanding, through regular checks, of their knowledge, skills and behaviours both in the classroom and when working on the railway network. As a result, on- and off-the-job training is well linked and highly effective.

Trainers plan the curriculum so that apprentices can logically build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. For example, trainers deliver essential health and safety topics in the context of work on railway tracks and in night-time conditions.

Trainers use their significant subject and industry expertise well to relate theory to practice. Apprentices benefit from current examples of techniques for changing

damaged sleepers and track fault finding. They value the support and verbal feedback that trainers and mentors provide. They find discussions about their work helpful in identifying what they can do to improve.

Trainers receive feedback on the quality of training sessions through informal observations. Leaders and managers acknowledge the need to strengthen this further and have begun to implement a more formal system. It is too soon to assess the impact of this initiative.

Leaders are developing plans to improve careers advice and guidance. Most apprentices want to remain with the employer after their apprenticeship. All apprentices who completed the apprenticeship last year still work in the industry.

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

Apprentices feel, and are, safe. Leaders and managers have successfully developed a strong safeguarding culture that trainers and mentors reinforce during on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding of how to stay safe in hazardous working environments.

Managers have suitable safeguarding policies and procedures in place and have completed a 'Prevent' risk register. The designated safeguarding officer and deputy have received appropriate training and have clear procedures for dealing with safeguarding incidents. Apprentices know whom to contact if they have a concern.

Apprentices' physical and mental well-being are checked frequently during reviews. They know they can contact an independent well-being consultancy. Topics such as British values, the 'Prevent' duty and county lines are discussed at reviews, but apprentices have little detailed recall.

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