

GP Strategies Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the second visit following safeguarding concerns that had been reported to Ofsted. The previous visit found that leaders and managers had made insufficient progress in complying with relevant safeguarding arrangements.

The safeguarding monitoring visit focused on early years apprenticeships only.

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

Themes

How do leaders and managers ensure that apprentices comply with the relevant safeguarding requirements?

Reasonable progress

The high priority that leaders and managers have placed on safeguarding since the previous monitoring visit has had a positive effect on the culture of safeguarding at GP Strategies Training Limited (GP Strategies). For example, staff, at all levels, now have a sufficient understanding of safeguarding and safeguarding-related issues because of the training they have received.

During the visit, leaders and managers supplied inspectors with the evidence they needed so that the inspectors could assure themselves that the organisation complies with safeguarding requirements. For example, leaders and managers now have processes in place to routinely conduct eligibility checks to ensure prospective early years apprentices' suitability for an apprenticeship. However, these processes remain untested as no new early years apprentices have started training since their introduction.

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and managers have worked closely with specialist safeguarding consultants to conduct a thorough review of safeguarding systems and processes. Leaders and managers have implemented new processes, which include workplace risk assessments. They now apply a 'zero tolerance' approach to employers who are judged to be significantly high risk. They monitor these employers closely and terminate contracts if the setting fails to improve. Risk assessments are now detailed, specific to the apprentices' workplace and include information about relevant safeguarding protocols.

Apprentices now benefit from a range of opportunities to learn about safeguarding and how they should apply their learning in the workplace. Apprentices attend mandatory online training where they learn about topics such as safeguarding considerations when working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Are arrangements for safeguarding apprentices appropriate and effective?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have begun to adapt and personalise safeguarding training to reflect the circumstances of apprentices and their employers. They recognise that they have more work to do, particularly when they recommence the recruitment of early years apprentices.

Apprentices report that safeguarding training has improved significantly since the previous monitoring visit. Previously, the only safeguarding training that apprentices received was through self-study. Apprentices did not like that they had no opportunity to discuss self-study activities with their peers. They felt that this was detrimental to their learning. They are now enthusiastic about their online training sessions and the return to face-to-face training sessions when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. All apprentices now complete an additional qualification in safeguarding, which tests their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, and how this relates to them and their work.

Leaders and managers have thoroughly reviewed their safeguarding policies and processes. The safeguarding policy is now appropriate and pays due regard to relevant safeguarding legislation. It is used routinely by staff who now understand their own roles and responsibilities for safeguarding.

Governance arrangements have begun to improve. Leaders recently appointed a new governor with responsibility for safeguarding. The governor has relevant experience and expertise in safeguarding gained as a designated safeguarding lead (DSL). They have only very recently attended their first board meeting. It is too soon to measure the impact of their contribution to the governing body.

Leaders have recently appointed two new DSLs and a deputy DSL. The DSLs and deputy DSL are well qualified and have considerable experience and expertise in their roles. Safeguarding 'champions', who have received additional training for their role, are now in place in all of GP Strategies regional offices. The recently introduced monthly safeguarding committee meetings ensure that DSLs, the deputy DSL and safeguarding staff learn lessons from safeguarding incidents and case reviews.

The provider's safeguarding incident central register is now fit for purpose. The register is reviewed weekly and shows clearly new safeguarding cases, those that

remain open, what actions have been completed and what new actions have been put in place. Safeguarding cases are closed promptly when it is safe to do so.

How well do staff respond to safeguarding concerns?

Reasonable progress

All skills coaches have been trained to level 3 in safeguarding. As a result of this training, skills coaches know the importance of sharing information with the DSLs, deputy DSL or safeguarding 'champions' when they have concerns about an apprentice or apprentices' workplaces.

Leaders and managers have collaborated with specialist safeguarding consultants to review the quality of safeguarding training materials. They have now incorporated the lessons learned from previous safeguarding incidents into their training for apprentices and staff. Staff and apprentices report that they are now better equipped and feel more confident to raise concerns. For example, in 2020, the DSL received very few safeguarding referrals. In the current year, the number of safeguarding referrals increased tenfold because staff know when they should refer safeguarding or safeguarding-related concerns.

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and managers have begun a staff restructure. Where previously all types of training, including apprenticeships, were managed by directors for each region, leaders have now introduced sector specific learning academies. This means that managers responsible for apprentices on early qualifications now communicate more routinely and more effectively with managers from other regions. They now use online meetings to meet more frequently. The restructure is ongoing and has not yet been fully implemented.

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