

Inspection of KnowledgeBrief Limited

Inspection dates:

6–9 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Established in 2005, KnowledgeBrief Limited is a commercial training provider specialising in leadership and management training programmes. KnowledgeBrief gained a contract to teach apprenticeships in May 2017. The company is based in central London but works with levy paying employers nationally. At the time of the inspection there were 111 apprentices on the level 3 team leader/supervisor standard, 149 apprentices on the level 5 operations departmental manager standard, one apprentice on the level 2 customer service practitioner standard and 10 apprentices on the level 3 customer service specialist standard. There were 47 of these apprentices on a break in learning. Recruitment of apprentices to the customer services programmes was paused.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

The majority of apprentices are very positive about their experience. They are motivated and enthusiastic about their apprenticeship. Apprentices develop good behaviours for work and develop their emotional intelligence.

Apprentices appreciate the breadth of knowledge and expertise of their trainers. Apprentices who have been out of learning for a significant length of time receive good support to regain their study skills. Apprentices have positive relationships with their skills coaches, who work closely with employers to develop apprentices' essential leadership skills. This helps apprentices to lead their teams more confidently and take on more responsibility.

Apprentices are respectful and courteous towards each other and staff. Those apprentices who attend the useful optional well-being webinars gain a better understanding of how to take care of their mental well-being. Apprentices feel very supported and safe.

Apprentices enjoy the short online lessons. However, they miss the face-to-face opportunity to network with apprentices from other organisations. Apprentices have very limited time to do this in the virtual breakout rooms during these lessons. As a result, they do not gain the full benefits from sharing ideas and insights with others.

Those apprentices who need qualifications in English and mathematics do not get support early enough in their programme to complete these.

Too many apprentices have been disappointed with the disruption caused through the high turnover of skills coaches over the past few months. This has hampered their rate of progress.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous progress monitoring visit, leaders and governors have taken suitable actions to make improvements. These actions have started to have a positive effect on apprentices' experiences. For example, apprentices' employers are now sufficiently involved in the programme. Most apprentices understand what to expect during their end-point assessment. However, many of the newly implemented actions have not yet had an impact.

Leaders and managers have not put together a curriculum that supports apprentices well enough. Leaders do not plan the curriculum beyond the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, apprentices, particularly those on the level 3 programme, do not receive sufficient careers advice and guidance. The way leaders have designed the curriculum restricts apprentices' access to the optional online personal development sessions.

The proportion of apprentices who achieve their end-point assessment is too low. A large number of apprentices left their programme early. Half of these left due to the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus). However, others left because they had not received sufficient information at the start of their programme. They did not appreciate the commitment and expectations. Of those apprentices who have taken their end-point assessment, the vast majority have achieved high grades.

Leaders have improved their partnership working with employers. They work closely with a small number of employers to design programmes specifically to meet their needs. For example, leaders have added extra sessions to apprentices' programmes to incorporate employers' values and expected behaviours. They have designed bespoke methods for employers to check their apprentices' progress.

The vocational curriculum is put together logically to support apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Skills coaches and trainers challenge and support apprentices to develop a good range of new leadership and management skills. For example, apprentices learn how to become more effective leaders. They understand how their company values influence their management style. They manage their time better. Employers value how apprentices apply these skills in the workplace.

Skills coaches and trainers have extensive experience and knowledge in leadership and management. They have high expectations of their apprentices. They use their knowledge effectively to give apprentices useful explanations of topics. They also give apprentices very insightful and detailed feedback on their written assignments. The feedback is developmental, constructive, and clearly identifies how the apprentices have achieved the desired standard. Apprentices also know how to improve their work. As a result, apprentices on both leadership programmes produce good quality work.

Apprentices have access to high-quality resources to support their learning and development. This includes bite-sized e-learning modules and short videos. Apprentices benefit from clear and relevant information that helps them improve their business literacy, proof reading techniques and punctuation. They also access a good range of resources that promote equality and diversity, and well-being. Other resources inform apprentices about fundamental British values. Most apprentices understand these topics.

The extent to which skills coaches and trainers use assessment effectively varies too much. Recently recruited apprentices benefit from useful discussions about their strengths and weaknesses, assessed when they started the programme. They have clear actions to help them improve. However, apprentices recruited earlier onto the programme have not had these areas assessed sufficiently. Skills coaches do not ensure that these apprentices benefit from clear goals or a personalised plan. During online teaching sessions, trainers do not check enough that apprentices understand the topics they teach.

Leaders and managers do not keep track of the impact of the apprenticeship programme. They do not fully understand how the curriculum has supported apprentices to develop in their jobs, progress to further education and/or future employment. As a result, they do not know how successful their apprenticeship programmes have been.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and staff promote a positive safeguarding culture across the organisation. They are aware of the risks to their apprentices, such as workplace bullying and stress. They have put in place a range of activities to ensure apprentices feel safe and know whom to report to if they have any concerns. They update their actions plans and policies frequently to include emerging topics, such as the recently highlighted sexual harassment issues.

Leaders and managers have ensured that apprentices have a reasonable and appropriate understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. An area identified as a weakness in the previous progress monitoring visit.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices benefit from a curriculum that helps them to achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics in a timely manner, understand how to progress to their next steps, and develop them beyond the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for their apprenticeship standard.
- Ensure skills coaches and trainers use assessment effectively. Skills coaches should ensure that apprentices benefit from an individual learning plan that clearly takes into account the assessment of their prior knowledge and skills. Trainers should check apprentices' understanding of topics more thoroughly.
- Leaders should put in place appropriate measures to assess the impact of their leadership programme. They should gather reliable information that tells them how the curriculum has supported apprentices to be successful.
- Increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes and achieve their end-point assessment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278615
Address	85 Great Portland Street London W1W 7LT
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Website	www.knowledgebrief.com
Principal/CEO	Jeanne Meinholt
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Quality Director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous progress monitoring report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting online learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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