

Inspection of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals National Health Service Trust

Inspection dates:

17 to 19 August 2021

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals National Health Service Trust is a large hospital trust in the West Midlands. It is responsible for three hospitals, numerous local healthcare settings and employs around 7,000 staff. The provider team operates predominantly in Birmingham and the Black Country. It currently provides training for around 70 apprentices, most of whom are on standards-based programmes. They offer apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3. Most apprentices follow courses in healthcare, business administration, customer service and team leader. The trust does not subcontract provision to other providers.

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

Apprentices enjoy their learning because of the support and encouragement they receive. They value the interaction with trainers and the positive environments in which they work, both face to face and online. Consequently, apprentices feel acknowledged, listened to and respected irrespective of their backgrounds, experience or age.

Apprentices also enjoy the smaller group teaching sessions, enabling all participants to contribute. Tutors are skilled at understanding apprentices' barriers to learning and how to help them flourish in their respective workplaces. As a result, apprentices grow in confidence and self-belief, being able to achieve their future career aims – many within the trust.

Apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours, both on- and off-the-job, for example doing health tests with patients and work-based projects to improve systems and procedures. Most apprentices do well in their final assessments; most achieve high grades and move into their intended next steps. In a few cases, tutors do not ensure that apprentices on healthcare courses are sufficiently aware of their end point assessments so they can achieve the grades of which they are capable.

Apprentices receive comprehensive and helpful careers advice and guidance before and during their apprenticeship so they can make informed choices about their next steps. As a result, most apprentices move into roles at the trust or into higher-level learning.

Apprentices receive comprehensive safeguarding training and information and know local potential issues and threats well. As a result, apprentices know who to contact if concerned and feel safe at work.

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

Leaders and governors expect and support apprentices to excel so they develop the skills necessary to contribute towards the long-term sustainability of the trust (the employer). Also, the trust recognises the importance of apprentices in strengthening their activities and improving the quality of service that they offer.

Leaders engage effectively with the trust and the wider community to inform their curriculum strategy. As a result of COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, they have focused mostly on delivering programmes that provide apprentices with learning and career opportunities within the trust. For example, healthcare qualifications enable apprentices to progress into higher-level nursing apprenticeships.

Trainers ensure that curriculum content matches the needs of the trust. For example, healthcare apprentices learn about their roles on various wards and apply new knowledge, including doing blood pressure, oxygen saturation and pulse rate

tests. Consequently, apprentices on both healthcare and business-related apprenticeships become familiar with their roles and apply their skills at work swiftly.

Trainers bring their extensive knowledge and expertise to life in sessions, helping apprentices to remember more long term. Nursing and mental health trainers reinforce learning points with real-life examples from their own experience. For example, in one session, the trainer explained the challenges and skills necessary to support and administer infection control with patients who have learning disabilities. As a result, apprentices remember these examples and associated knowledge for future assessments and their work.

Although apprentices prefer face-to-face teaching, in response to the pandemic, trainers have moved effectively to teaching online. Trainers have learned much from courses for remote teaching and now use activities such as breakout rooms, chat functions and quiz and polling applications effectively to share, discuss and assess apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Using these skills, trainers helped business and team leader apprentices to develop their work-based projects particularly well, including a business administration apprentice who streamlined a bowel screening record-keeping system used for reports to the Department of Health.

Trainers use a variety of assessment activities to check thoroughly what apprentices know and can do. In sessions, assessors question apprentices skilfully to draw out and deepen their knowledge. They also use activities such as mini presentations to check apprentices' understanding and improve their presentation and public speaking skills. Trainers accept that not all assessment activities, including apprentices' course workbooks, enable them to explore sufficiently higher-order tasks such as analysis and study skills that are appropriate for the level of learning.

Most apprentices receive helpful and supportive verbal and written feedback on their work. Trainers routinely correct apprentices' written work for spelling and grammar, but they do not always provide sufficiently specific feedback so that all apprentices know how to achieve their best.

Leaders and trainers monitor carefully those apprentices who fall behind in their work and provide them with effective individual support so that they can catch up. They also ensure that learners who have an identified learning need receive the help needed to achieve well.

Trainers and trust mentors ensure that apprentices receive the requisite on- and off-the-job training and review their progress every eight weeks. Apprentices receive helpful feedback on their progress overall, but trainers do not monitor sufficiently the extent to which apprentices make progress from their respective starting points. Consequently, apprentices do not know clearly whether they are on track to achieve the grades that they should. Trainers in business administration and team leader do not enable apprentices to access sufficiently broad opportunities to explore different employer settings, limiting their experience and view of alternative employment opportunities.

Leaders identify rightly actions to improve the quality of provision, such as the effective delivery of remote learning, functional skills and staff's training. However, their actions do not ensure that all trainers are able to support apprentices to achieve their potential.

Trainers speak highly of the help and development they receive from leaders. Leaders responded quickly to the COVID-19 restrictions, enabling trainers to access and use a variety of online communication tools. As a result, most apprentices were able to continue in learning. Trainers acknowledge this support and speak positively about how leaders manage their workload and general well-being sensitively.

Governors use information about apprentices' progress effectively – including a survey about access to high-quality, online learning – to question and hold leaders to account. They ask leaders about reducing the proportion of apprentices who are behind in their work and the extent to which apprentices achieve high grades. However, governors do not know the progress apprentices should be making, limiting their ability to challenge leaders completely.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on safeguarding at the provider and at the trust. They have comprehensive safeguarding policies that set out clearly their expectations. These include enhanced health and safety requirements because of COVID-19 restrictions, such as the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.

The provider has two designated safeguarding leads who have developed effective links with local and regional safeguarding boards which provide them with the most up-to-date information about the potential risks in apprentices' local communities. During their induction and learning sessions, apprentices learn about current threats, such as gang-related activity, county lines and extremist animal rights, right-wing and religious group activity. They also learn about topics such as female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation and how to recognise signs of them in the workplace and in their communities. As a result, apprentices have a strong understanding of the potential threats and know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

Leaders have an appropriate safer recruitment process and ensure that all teaching staff hold the requisite disclosure in order to work with apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that all trainers provide apprentices with sufficiently helpful feedback so that they can achieve their potential.

- Leaders and governors must ensure that all apprentices make the progress that they should.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices benefit from wider experiences outside of the trust to enrich their knowledge of their job role.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54263
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Contact number	07972 288117
Website	www.swbh.nhs.uk
Principal/CEO	Maxine Griffiths
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship lead, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection 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 apprentices' sessions, scrutinising apprentices' work, seeking the views of apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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