

Short inspection of Prostart Training

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2021

Outcome

Prostart Training continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Prostart Training is an independent learning provider based in Long Eaton in the East Midlands. It runs numerous apprenticeship courses. The large majority of apprentices work for public sector organisations in Nottinghamshire.

At the time of the inspection, Prostart was offering training to 193 apprentices. The largest groups of apprentices follow level 5 management apprenticeship courses, level 3 business administration or level 3 team leading apprenticeships. Smaller numbers of apprentices study facilities management at level 3, or customer service at level 2. The large majority of apprentices are adults.

Prostart also offers traineeship courses to young people. At the time of the inspection, there were fewer than five trainees. They study at a separate centre in Mansfield.

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

Apprentices have a very positive attitude towards their studies. They benefit from an open and communicative culture at Prostart, and highly value the support that they receive from all staff. Apprentices appreciate the adaptations leaders have made to help them study remotely during COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, but many would now prefer more in-person lessons.

The large majority of apprentices develop knowledge, skills and behaviours to help them to perform more effectively at work. At the end of their course, many move from temporary job roles into permanent ones, or gain promotion.

Trainees enjoy both their studies and their work placements. They comment that they feel as if they are 'in a family' when they study at Prostart. They develop their knowledge of personal boundaries, and of their own skills and attributes, which helps them to study more confidently in class.

Both apprentices and trainees rightly feel safe at Prostart. They know whom to contact if they have a safeguarding concern, and feel confident that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously. Inspectors agreed with them.

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

Leaders, coaches and tutors have developed highly relevant courses for both apprentices and trainees. Coaches work with apprentices' line managers to ensure that there is a clear link between what apprentices learn and their jobs. Coaches also ensure that apprentices receive helpful training and support for writing assignments, and thorough preparation for their final assessments. Apprentices have a good understanding of these assessments.

Coaches and tutors structure their teaching logically to ensure that apprentices and trainees learn topics thoroughly. Level 5 management apprentices develop their knowledge of emotional intelligence and their own leadership styles before focusing on how leadership affects their teams. Mathematics tutors working with trainees first check that they have a grasp of fundamental concepts before developing their knowledge through increasingly challenging practice questions. Tutors integrate these effectively with questions to check understanding of previous topics. Trainees confidently explain how they work out the mostly correct answers they produce.

In taught sessions for apprentices, coaches make effective use of tasks to draw upon the professional experiences of apprentices. This enables apprentices to produce detailed studies of complex work-related problems. For example, level 3 business administration apprentices working in healthcare produce thorough analyses of the impact of Brexit on their workplaces.

Apprentices benefit from frequent and supportive review meetings with their line managers and coaches. This helps the large majority of apprentices to remain on target with their learning. However, the documentation that leaders provide to record these reviews is cumbersome, and as a result not used effectively. Apprentices do not have a simple, easily accessible record of their strengths and areas for development after reviews.

Apprentices and trainees with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive useful support from coaches to help them continue their studies successfully. Trainees receive additional help from supportive teaching assistants. Leaders and tutors produce well-considered support plans for each trainee, so that staff can help them when they show challenging behaviour.

In the large majority of cases, both apprentices and trainees produce good-quality written work. A high proportion of apprentices who complete their course gain distinction grades. Many trainees move into paid work or, in a few cases, onto apprenticeships, at the end of their studies.

Leaders have accurately identified weaknesses within both apprenticeship and traineeship courses, and have taken successful steps to make improvements. For example, they identified that too many apprentices did not complete level 3 business administration courses due to concerns about their final assessments. Leaders' actions have reduced this number, although the proportion of apprentices who drop out of the course is still too high. Leaders have also taken action to improve the teaching of mathematics and English to trainees, which has led to greatly improved achievement rates.

Leaders recently altered their approach to quality assurance, to ensure a greater focus on coach and tutor development. This has supported newer coaches to make improvements to their teaching sessions. However, in too many cases, leaders focus too closely on describing teaching activities rather than evaluating how effective they are.

Both apprentices and trainees have access to useful careers information, advice and guidance. Leaders have ensured that the traineeship curriculum includes the opportunity for young people to experience valuable careers-related activities. These include guest speakers from industry, and research activities on potential careers that support trainees to produce their own career plans.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that trainees and apprentices are safe when studying. Managers with responsibility for safeguarding work well with external partners, such as the regional 'Prevent' duty coordinator, to develop detailed knowledge of the most pertinent local risks. They use this information to provide trainees, apprentices and staff with appropriate briefs and updates.

Managers carry out suitable risk assessments to ensure that trainees are safe when they study and work away from Prostart's main centre. Safeguarding staff record and track safeguarding incidents well.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that the volume of apprentices at level 3 who successfully complete their courses increases to high levels.
- Leaders should ensure that review procedures support apprentices' development well, for example by including a summary of apprentices' strengths and areas for development.
- Leaders should ensure that quality assurance procedures support all coaches' and tutors' development, for example by ensuring that observations of lessons are evaluative rather than overly descriptive.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54006
Address	Trent Valley Business Centre 28 High Street Long Eaton Nottingham NG10 1LL
Contact number	0115 946 8182
Website	www.prostartuk.co.uk
CEO	Denise Newcomb
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 April 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Prostart Training was judged to be good in April 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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 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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