

Inspection of Dutton Fisher Associates Limited

Inspection dates:

23–26 November 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

Dutton Fisher Associates Limited was established in 2009 and started delivering levy-funded apprenticeships in May 2017. At the time of the inspection, all apprentices were on standards-based programmes. There are currently 467 apprentices; most of whom are aged 19 years and older. Two thirds of apprentices are on housing programmes across England. There are 19 apprentices on level 2 housing management assistant, 185 on level 3 housing management, and 121 on level 4 senior housing management. Of the remaining apprentices, fewer than five are on level 2 customer service, five on level 3 business administration, 67 on level 3 team leading, six on level 5 coaching, and seven on level 6 chartered management.

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

Apprentices benefit from highly experienced and professional tutors and mentors in housing and management. Staff use their knowledge well to support apprentices to achieve their goals. They skilfully provide academic guidance to apprentices and, as a result, apprentices improve their research skills and can reference their work more effectively. Apprentices enjoy learning and are proud of their development.

Apprentices are aspirational, inquisitive and highly motivated to achieve. For example, level 2 customer service apprentices describe how their apprenticeship has opened their eyes to new opportunities, including becoming a paralegal within their employer or being able to work abroad.

Apprentices develop their confidence and resilience well as a result of being exposed to a wide range of working practices. For example, apprentices whose role involves serving legal papers on their clients do so professionally. Apprentices in level 4 housing become mentors for apprentices on lower-level programmes, providing them with effective peer support.

Apprentices develop their professionalism quickly. They develop their decision-making skills, improve their confidence, and take pride in their work. For example, level 2 housing apprentices quickly become confident to call people on the telephone and share their opinions at team meetings.

Tutors ensure that apprentices are safe and know who to contact if they need additional support and guidance. Level 6 chartered management apprentices have a comprehensive knowledge of local risks associated with modern slavery, county lines and knife crime.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for providing apprenticeships in housing and in leadership and management. They use their significant experience of the housing sector to develop programmes that support apprentices to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They liaise effectively with employers to plan a curriculum that includes units which are pertinent to the job roles that apprentices will perform. Employers rightly value the positive communication and interaction with Dutton Fisher Associates.

Leaders and managers have made many positive improvements since the recent monitoring visit, including increasing their staffing capacity. However, in a few instances, they have not responded quickly enough to support apprentices who have fallen behind in their learning.

Leaders have taken effective measures to implement new governance arrangements. They have engaged with an external specialist to provide them with

support and challenge. The specialist has a strong understanding of the education sector and uses their experience to provide challenge to leaders on areas which need improving.

Tutors skilfully use their extensive knowledge of the subjects they teach to help apprentices gain a thorough understanding the topics that they learn about. They provide helpful feedback on written work which helps apprentices to improve quickly.

Apprentices have a clear understanding of what is required of them for their programme. They benefit from useful course guidance which outlines clearly the programme of delivery. This includes contacts for safeguarding, as well as a clear explanation of the end-point assessment process.

Tutors teach online lessons skilfully. They use breakout rooms and chat facilities to check apprentices' knowledge and understanding, and to facilitate groupwork that apprentices participate in fully. Tutors break down concepts into incremental steps so that apprentices can use them to develop and improve their knowledge and apply it to their job roles. Tutors frequently contextualise learning to apprentices' roles by, for example, asking apprentices to describe how globalisation has affected the supported housing sector.

Tutors use effective questioning techniques to check apprentices' understanding of previous learning and to build this knowledge into new learning. For example, apprentices describe changes to the housing market that has resulted in price inflation, such as reduction of stamp duty, help to buy schemes, and the impact of working at home due to the national COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, apprentices build their knowledge of causal factors associated with house price surges and crashes.

Apprentices who need to develop their skills and achieve qualifications in English and mathematics receive helpful support from a range of online workshops to fill knowledge gaps and meet their needs. Apprentices develop their writing skills when producing written assignments, including the correct use of vocabulary to make reports easy to read and accurate. They also successfully develop their communication skills through, for example, delivering presentations. Tutors integrate mathematics into teaching effectively, including the use of spreadsheets, Venn diagrams and calculating rent arrears and costs.

Apprentices have a strong understanding of equality and diversity as these topics are an integral aspect of most apprentices' work. For example, apprentices receive training about how to deal sensitively with homeless people, clients with poor mental health and those that find themselves in financial hardship.

Tutors support apprentices to progress successfully following completion of their apprenticeship, either by continuing to study at the next level or securing promotion. For example, many level 3 housing management apprentices have secured team leader roles. However, for a few apprentices, tutors do not plan a clear enough

careers programme so that these apprentices are fully informed about their career opportunities.

For a few apprentices, tutors do not set targets that are precise enough to inform apprentices of what they need to learn or improve. Progress reviews focus closely on the progress that apprentices are making in the development of knowledge but, in a few instances, have less emphasis on the skills and behaviours that apprentices need to be successful at work. Consequently, a few apprentices do not progress as swiftly as they could.

A few apprentices have been recruited onto programmes that are not sufficiently challenging for them given their prior knowledge and experience. Too often, these apprentices repeat study in subjects that they already know and can do. Leaders have recognised this and have recently improved their recruitment process. As a result, all recently recruited apprentices are on the correct programme.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place that they use to keep apprentices safe. They have appointed an appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who liaises with other DSLs and safeguarding contacts in the areas they operate. Leaders and managers have established effective systems for recording causes for concern, and the actions that they take ensure that apprentices are safe.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training at the start of their employment. Managers communicate appropriately with Prevent duty advisers, and circulate the information that they receive to staff and apprentices via informative newsletters. Leaders ensure that apprentices' welfare is carefully considered, and that any actions taken are relevant.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices are supported to make good progress from their starting points and achieve their qualifications in a timely manner.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive appropriate initial advice and guidance to check they are on the correct level of apprenticeship.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive helpful careers advice and guidance throughout their programme.
- Ensure that all apprentices are set helpful and meaningful targets that help them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276426
Address	Office 309, Wizu Work Space The Leeming Building Ludgate Hill Leeds LS2 7HZ
Contact number	01943 609541
Website	www.duttonfisher.com
Principal/CEO	Jo Fisher
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 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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