

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 58507

Name of lead inspector: Suzanne Wainwright, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 March 2022

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address:
Ambleside
Stalybridge
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, known locally as Works4U, is a small independent specialist college based in Stalybridge, Greater Manchester. It offers programmes for young people who have significant barriers to learning. These barriers relate to social, emotional, mental health and behavioural difficulties. The majority of learners also have a learning disability such as autism spectrum disorder. Each learner has an education, health and care plan. As a result, the Education and Skills Funding Agency recently changed the provider's status from an independent learning provider to an independent specialist college.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 52 learners enrolled at the provider, mostly from the areas of Tameside, Manchester, Salford and Stockport. These learners were on programmes from entry level to level 1. Most learners study qualifications in personal and social skills and vocational skills in construction (carpentry), catering, art and animal care. For most of their education and training, learners attend the main centre, the farm, and industry-standard facilities at a local football club. Around a fifth of learners undertake relevant work experience linked to their learning. At the time of the visit, nine learners were involved in an enrichment project where they were making a documentary about themselves in collaboration with Media City in Salford.

The focus of this visit was on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements following the insufficient progress judgement from the previous monitoring visit in October 2021.

Theme

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place, including rectifying the shortfalls as identified at the previous monitoring visit? Reasonable progress

Since the previous safeguarding monitoring visit, leaders have revised and improved their safeguarding processes. They have taken appropriate action to ensure that their vulnerable learners are not at risk of harm from poor safeguarding practices. For example, leaders have introduced improved safer recruitment processes to ensure that they appoint suitable staff to work with their learners. The recruitment of new staff is well planned and carefully documented. Leaders seek the views of their learners on potential new members of staff by involving them in the recruitment process. Learners' views help to assess whether candidates have the appropriate values and attributes needed for working with learners who have significant barriers to learning. However, since the previous monitoring visit, there have been very few

new staff appointments and these have been very recent. Consequently, leaders have had limited opportunity to test the impact of the new approach fully.

In January 2022, the advisory board appointed new board members who have a wealth of experience in safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children. These members are from early years and primary school backgrounds. They have provided leaders with suitable advice and guidance on improving their safeguarding policies and procedures. Leaders have rewritten college documents in line with these recommendations. Inspectors had no concerns about the relevance of the new policies and procedures to the provider's current post-16 context. However, board members and leaders recognise that they would benefit from additional support and guidance from post-16 organisations to ensure that their safeguarding procedures continue to meet the needs, ages and vulnerabilities of their learners.

Leaders and managers continue to provide staff with appropriate mandatory training for safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They have created an internal 'staff hub' that contains all safeguarding documentation and updates. Staff find this centralised repository invaluable and refer to it regularly. Managers monitor staff access of the hub to ensure that it is fully utilised. They check staff's understanding of safeguarding issues in weekly staff meetings. Staff can now recall the content of their training. They are confident to ask advice from the safeguarding team to ensure that they keep their learners safe. Staff know how to keep young people safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They understand how to recognise the signs of radicalisation in young people and others.

Learners feel safe and, consequently, enjoy their learning. They know who to go to if they need to report any concerns or are simply having a 'bad day'. They feel comfortable to do this and know that they will be listened to. Learners can explain accurately the meaning and implications of radicalisation and extremism. They know how to keep themselves safe such as when travelling to and from the college and what to do if they feel in danger. For example, if they feel unsafe in public, they would go into a shop to ask for help.

Learners know how to keep safe when using social media. They know not to answer messages from anyone they do not know. Most learners understand what inappropriate pictures and videos are and that they must not send these to anyone. Staff work with appropriate professional services to support those few learners who need further help in understanding the dangers of 'sexting' and other online safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding records are detailed and up to date. The designated safeguarding lead and leaders deal effectively with safeguarding concerns, often going above and beyond their duty to keep young people safe from harm. Incidents that affect young people often occur outside college hours. Staff support learners to manage these situations successfully. They deal effectively with incidents relating to the mental health of their learners. Leaders work tirelessly with external agencies to help learners and their families to receive the help and support that they need to

overcome their barriers. For example, leaders ensure that the living accommodation meets the needs and vulnerabilities of their young people.

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