

Fresh Commun-IT Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2626834
Name of lead inspector:	Steve Lambert, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	214 Whitby Road Middlesex HA4 9DY

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Fresh Commun-IT Limited was founded in 2015 to provide training and information technology (IT) support to individuals within the local community. In 2019, the company started training apprentices, but stopped when staff were furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic. They relaunched their apprenticeship programme in January 2022 and at the time of this monitoring visit had 7 apprentices on the level 3 information communication technology (ICT) standard. All apprentices are adults. They work for an employer who provides IT support and after-school computer coding clubs to local schools. Fresh Commun-IT Limited does not work with any subcontractors.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Leaders started teaching the level 3 ICT apprenticeship standard to provide opportunities for locals to move into a career in IT support. They work closely with their employer to carefully consider the needs of the schools in which apprentices are placed. For example, they have added additional training in computer programming and customer service for those apprentices who will be supporting after-school coding clubs.

Leaders have recruited experienced teaching staff who have expertise in IT support. Teachers use their knowledge of the IT industry well to explain topics to apprentices. This helps apprentices to develop their knowledge quickly.

Leaders have started to undertake reviews with apprentices and their employer. These are starting to provide leaders with an understanding of the progress apprentices have made. However, currently leaders do not have a sufficiently detailed overview of the progress that the group of apprentices is making. Consequently, leaders are not able to plan any interventions that are needed.

Staff ensure that apprentices have suitable jobs that match the standard they are studying. Through information provided at the start of the programme, they ensure that apprentices and their line manager are aware of and meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standards.

Leaders have recently established a governing board to provide oversight of the company. The board includes two external members, to give impartiality to that oversight. However, the board has yet to meet, so has not provided support or challenge to leaders.

Leaders evaluate accurately the quality of training and know the strengths and weaknesses of the company well. They support staff to teach lessons more effectively and are starting to ensure that what apprentices learn off the job links more closely with work in their job roles.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers work effectively with their employer to teach apprentices the skills they need to be immediately productive at work. For example, they teach basic network structures and protocols in a 10-day block early in the programme. Apprentices are given time to experiment with virtual environments to understand computer operating systems and networks. They also learn how to install software and create scripts to automate future software updates. This helps apprentices develop the skills needed to be able to troubleshoot and solve basic issues that users may have. As a result, apprentices learn substantial new knowledge that they apply in their jobs.

Tutors use clear explanations, demonstrations and analogies to help learners remember key concepts. They find opportunities to teach apprentices when situations arise at work. Apprentices remember what they have learned and can clearly explain the process to set up servers for open stack, how to ping an IP address and how to crimp cables effectively.

Apprentices benefit from frequent progress meetings with tutors and with their line managers. However, the objectives set are not always related closely enough to developing the skills apprentices need for the apprenticeship.

Apprentices develop their English skills through writing reports and presentations during lessons. Apprentices develop their mathematics skills through the computer coding clubs and planning software installation. However, staff do not sufficiently plan the teaching of English and mathematics to meet any specific knowledge or skills gaps that apprentices have. Managers have plans in place to begin the teaching of functional skills for the small number of apprentices who require these qualifications.

Leaders and managers do not have a detailed enough understanding of what apprentices are working on. At present, they do not know enough about what work the apprentices are doing sufficiently in advance. This limits staff in being able to plan training that supports apprentices to be able to take on increasingly complex IT support issues.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders have good oversight of safeguarding and apprentices' well-being and mental health. They update their policies and practices to take account of new or emerging local threats. They have links with agencies in the vicinity where they have apprentices. As the newly established governance board comes into operation, leaders need to ensure that governors have an appropriate oversight of safeguarding too.

Leaders ensure that suitable staff are in place and that they are appropriately trained. Staff know how to identify apprentices who are at risk. They take effective action with, and on behalf of, apprentices where issues are raised. However, they do not keep comprehensive enough records of actions taken.

At the start of the course, staff give apprentices good information about safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. However, they do not ensure apprentices remember well enough how these topics relate to their jobs.

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