

Inspection of Lifetime Training Group Limited

Inspection dates: 10 to 16 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Lifetime Training Group (Lifetime) was originally established in 1995 and is now a very large independent training provider. It has a head office based in the city of Bristol and has no other permanent offices in England. The majority of its 900 staff are field-based learning coaches and tutors providing learning and support to around 19,300 apprentices and 350 adult learners across England. Most training and support sessions for learners currently take place online, but the company is gradually reintroducing face-to-face training.

Lifetime offers 13 framework-based programmes to around 290 apprentices and 35 standards-based programmes for the remainder. These include apprenticeships in the hospitality, care, retail, management, business, active leisure and early years sectors. Approximately 45% of apprentices are following a Level 2 and 45% a Level 3 programme.

Around a quarter of all apprentices are studying programmes in hospitality. Another quarter are studying adult care programmes. Adult learners aim to gain qualifications in either care or fitness. No new learners are being recruited to this provision. The provider has a small sub-contracted provision: Mitchells and Butlers plc (commis chef standard) and Leading Results Ltd (organisation departmental manager, team leader supervisor and coaching professional standard).

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

Apprentices have mixed views about their experience of being a learner on a Lifetime apprenticeship. Learners' positive comments are frequently countered by a substantial minority who are more negative. This reflects the lack of consistently high-quality training for apprentices and the greater or lesser extent to which they develop their personal and professional skills. For example, most learners are highly motivated to learn and have a positive attitude to learning. They welcome being on a Lifetime training programme and feel personally and professionally well-supported by their learning coaches. The quality of support from coaches is a consistently positive experience for the large majority of apprentices. However, a minority of apprentices are less positive. For example, too many have struggled to complete their apprenticeship in the planned timescale. These apprentices have become disillusioned and demotivated as a result. Too many apprentices find the mainly remote online learning approach either difficult to access technically or too much like unsupported self-study. They dislike the lack of face-to-face training. Too many of these apprentices have not had the continuity and consistency of support from coaching staff they have needed. Consequently, the rate and depth of these apprentices' learning have been slowed.

Too many apprentices do not get enough high-quality, off-the-job training. In a minority of cases, apprentices' line managers are not sufficiently involved in identifying how the curriculum can be integrated with apprentices' on-the-job training. Consequently, apprentices too often spend their own time completing their off-the-job training assignments at home outside of work hours. As a result, not all apprentices are developing the substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours of which they are capable and which their employers expect.

A very small minority of coaches do not have a good understanding of teaching methodologies. These coaches rely too heavily on simply directing apprentices to online learning resources but then do not elaborate on them sufficiently during subsequent taught or one-to-one coaching sessions. Nonetheless, most coaches conduct an effective assessment of apprentices' vocational, literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge at the beginning of their apprenticeship which they use well to plan what individual apprentices need to learn. During their regular contact with apprentices, most learning coaches make good use of work-related discussions which connect apprentices' knowledge and learning to their industry contexts. As a result, these apprentices recognise and appreciate the value and relevance of their learning. Most are well-motivated and keen to pursue their studies. They are able to make links to the professional standards, knowledge and expectations of their chosen industry.

Curriculum staff work closely with employers to ensure adult learners on fitness and care programmes have access to industry-standard resources and are well supported and safe in their placements. Most adult learners use Lifetime's well-resourced learning portal with confidence to support their learning, along with a range of employability and careers guidance modules. The great majority of all Lifetime's learners feel safe.

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

Leaders' implementation of their curriculums is not consistently good and does not sufficiently meet the needs of all apprentices. This is because too many learning coaches are not implementing their curriculums fully during their contact with apprentices. Further, leaders and managers have not been monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of their provision with sufficient rigour or planning for improvement in ways that are specific and measurable.

Leaders have not identified all the provision's weaknesses, nor the specific actions that will have the biggest impact on improving apprentices' learning experiences. Consequently, systemic issues are not being dealt with thoroughly enough. These issues include the minority of apprentices who struggle to achieve functional skills qualifications in English or mathematics, which means they cannot start their end-of-course assessments. Leaders recognise that apprentices' achievement rates have not been high enough in all apprenticeships, but so far, leaders' actions to increase the proportion completing their qualifications have had only a modest impact.

Leaders are only now beginning to implement a new and more easy-to-interrogate learner management system. They plan to migrate a large number of learner records from the previous system in June of this year. In the interim, the current system has been in place for a long time and has not enabled leaders and managers to monitor and evaluate apprentices' progress and learning thoroughly enough. For instance, leaders have been monitoring apprentices' progress primarily through coaches' records of hours of contact and what was taught, but not what apprentices have learned.

Leaders had not until recently recognised the full extent to which apprentices have not all been getting the training they need in order to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, leaders have just begun implementing a comprehensive and tightly focused training plan for coaching and quality improvement staff. This provides staff with well-structured knowledge and strategies to best ensure that all apprentices experience effective off-the-job training. A key component is how to plan such training in collaboration with line managers which is closely aligned to apprentices' on-the-job training. However, as it is very recent, the impact of this new training plan cannot be gauged. Leaders have clearly recognised that too many apprentices are often well past their planned end dates, frequently as a result of the impact of the pandemic on their workplaces. At the time of inspection, leaders had not fully re-engaged with all these learners and re-planned their programmes so they could complete their qualification.

Governance arrangements are not wholly effective because they are focused primarily on monitoring aspects of the financial performance of the organisation, such as the number of new enrolments and those who have completed their learning. Governors do not focus enough on challenging leaders to improve all aspects of the quality of provision. The newly appointed chair of governors identifies

this weakness. The chair has firm plans to recruit more board-level expertise in quality improvement and to ensure leaders accord a higher priority to enacting whatever improvements are needed.

During their induction, all apprentices receive training on topics including equality, the rule of law, staying safe online and keeping themselves safe from radicalisation. However, further information on these topics is not reinforced by all learning coaches in subsequent discussions with apprentices. A few coaches are missing opportunities to deepen apprentices' knowledge progressively. As a result, Lifetime has a small number of apprentices who do not understand how such topics relate to them at work. These include adult care apprentices who do not fully appreciate how aspects such as equality, tolerance and respect are relevant to the social care profession and the needs and rights of clients.

Most apprentices understand how they will be assessed at the end of their apprenticeship and have good opportunities to practise for this with their coaches. For example, coaches practise professional discussions with apprentices and give them useful feedback on the written and oral work they have to prepare for their final assessment. While over half of apprentices achieve high grades in their final assessments, a small minority are not being given the encouragement and support they need to reach such high grades. Coaches do not all provide apprentices with effective and impartial advice to make informed choices on the next steps in their careers beyond their current employment.

Leaders and managers have ensured that Lifetime staff have structured opportunities to improve their professional skills and teaching practice through training. Coaches appreciate these opportunities and recognise they are designed to improve the teaching they provide to apprentices. However, leaders and managers do not evaluate the impact of this training extensively enough to assure themselves that the training has an impact in practice. As a result, coaches' teaching practice is not consistently effective.

Leaders have ensured that the system for providing learning support to apprentices is managed effectively across the organisation. This means that apprentices, for example those with dyslexia, receive the support that they need.

Most apprentices are personally and professionally very well supported by their learning coaches. Coaches have relevant and extensive industry skills, insight and experience which most use to good effect to ensure training is up to date. Coaches explain specialist technical information clearly during taught sessions and use a good range of learning materials and examples to back these up. Coaches model professional behaviours and lead one-to-one sessions with integrity and sensitivity. Coaches get to know their apprentices well in the course of the apprenticeship and use this knowledge to build a positive working relationship with them. They ensure that apprentices receive a high level of support for their well-being and know how to stay mentally healthy. As a result, most apprentices learn how to apply their knowledge, and they grow in self-confidence.

Leaders and managers work very closely with major employers and sector bodies in the UK in order to create carefully sequenced curriculums that have demonstrably positive impacts on apprentices and employers. Employers value Lifetime leaders' collaborative approach to curriculum development because it fully supports their organisational objectives. Lifetime's leaders and managers adapt curriculums regularly to ensure that each apprenticeship aligns with the core aims of employers' businesses. As a result, Lifetime's curriculums meet the needs of local, regional and national economies.

Lifetime leaders have worked successfully with numerous employers to support greater equality, diversity and inclusion in employers' businesses, for example to increase the number of staff from minority ethnic communities and improve social mobility.

Leaders and managers have effective monitoring, evaluation and support arrangements to ensure that their two subcontractors provide effective training to their apprentices. These arrangements have ensured that apprentices following programmes with the subcontractors have high-quality learning experiences and develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders have planned adult learners' programmes well to offer industry-recognised qualifications and relevant content. Learners value their programmes. Their curriculums fulfil the clearly defined purpose of providing learners with access to employment or promotion in their chosen career in either the fitness or care sectors

Most apprentices make a positive contribution to their workplaces. The skills they develop and apply are valued by their employers. In the best examples, apprentices apply the professional skills they have developed through their curriculum. For example, hospitality supervisor apprentices can apply what they have learned about running a shift and dealing with difficult or drunk customers at work. Retail apprentices learn how to record critical tasks to maintain productivity and hand this information over efficiently to the next work shift. In many cases, the apprenticeship gives employees with supervisory responsibilities the confidence in their workplace to be more positive in their interactions with customers and the staff they manage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have ensured that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place. Staff understand and follow these appropriately if they need to raise concerns about apprentices' or learners' safeguarding or welfare. Learners understand how to keep themselves and others safe at work.

The designated safeguarding lead and safeguarding team have all received appropriate training. This has ensured they have the professional knowledge and skills to manage any safeguarding concerns which are raised.

Almost all apprentices feel safe and know who they should contact if they have any worries about their own or other apprentices' and learners' safety. The very few Lifetime apprentices who are under 19 years old have not yet had any training on sexual harassment or peer-on-peer abuse.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should train the quality and coaching staff to ensure that they implement the curriculum fully so that apprentices receive all of the high-quality, off-the-job training they need and are entitled to so that they all gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders should redouble their efforts to ensure that apprentices who have passed their planned end dates receive the training and support they need to achieve their qualifications to the best of their ability.
- Leaders should implement new strategies designed to ensure that learning coaches involve all employers and line managers routinely in planning apprentices' training so that the content of apprentices' on- and off-the-job training are very closely aligned.
- Leaders should ensure that the new learner management system is used well to record, monitor and evaluate fully the progress that apprentices are making in their acquisition of substantial new knowledge and skills, including English and mathematics, their personal development, behaviours and attitudes.
- Leaders should revisit their self-assessment process to correctly identify all of the provision's strengths and weaknesses, using this information to inform and shape accurate, specific, measurable and time-bound quality planning to improve learners' and apprentices' experience.
- Governors should appoint one or more members who have extensive practical experience in quality improvement in order to improve their challenge and support for leaders' and managers' implementation of strategies to improve the quality of provision.
- Coaches should ensure that all apprentices' understanding of topics, including equality, diversity, inclusion, the rule of law and protecting themselves from the risks of radicalisation, are developed through discussion during regular face-to-face reviews so that all apprentices understand how such aspects relate to their professional and personal lives.
- Coaches should ensure that all apprentices who are able to are actively encouraged and supported to achieve the highest possible grades.
- Leaders, managers and coaches should ensure that apprentices receive impartial careers advice and guidance which equips them well for their current and future careers in their chosen sector.

Provider details

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Website	https://lifetimetraining.co.uk/
Principal/CEO	Alex Khan
Provider type	Independent training provider
Date of previous inspection	2016
Subcontractors	Mitchells and Butlers Plc Leading Results Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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.

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