

Inspection of Ensis Solutions Limited

Inspection dates:

2 to 5 August 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Ensis Solutions Limited (Ensis) is based in Leigh, Greater Manchester. Since its previous monitoring visit, leaders have restructured the management and training teams completely and refocused their provision on providing apprenticeships at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5, mostly for the health and social care sectors.

At the time of the inspection, Ensis had 207 apprentices in learning, all of whom were following apprenticeship standards. There were 84 apprentices on the level 2 adult care worker standard, 92 on the level 3 lead adult care worker standard, three on the level 4 lead practitioner in adult care standard, and 23 on the level 5 leader in adult care standard. Immediately prior to the inspection, leaders had relaunched apprenticeship standards in business administration and team leading. Five apprentices were following these programmes. Almost all apprentices work in residential care homes or for domiciliary care providers.

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

Most apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to their training. The majority of them develop new and often specialist knowledge and skills that help them to carry out their job roles more effectively. For example, apprentices learn how to care sensitively for residents with end-of-life care needs and support those with dementia using patience and understanding.

Skills coaches conduct learning sessions in a calm and respectful manner. They encourage open discussion and listen supportively to what apprentices have to say. Consequently, apprentices feel valued and comfortable in expressing a range of views and opinions.

Apprentices feel supported by their skills coaches. For example, in progress reviews, skills coaches discuss with apprentices how to keep mentally and physically healthy. Skills coaches promote apprentices' well-being and resilience. During the recent hot weather, they ensured that apprentices coped with the personal protective equipment that they are required to wear, and drank enough water to keep themselves hydrated.

Most employers identify the positive impact that apprentices' training brings to the workplace. They highlight particularly the improved confidence and communication skills that apprentices now demonstrate in their daily interactions with residents, their families and colleagues. For example, apprentices work independently on night shifts and participate fully in hand-over meetings.

Apprentices learn how to stay safe and what to do if they have any concerns either at work or in training. They are fully aware of their own responsibilities in the workplace to ensure that residents and service users are safe. They can explain articulately how to use specialist equipment such as hoists safely and how to prevent and/or limit cross-infection between staff and/or residents in care homes.

Prior to the management changes, apprentices did not benefit from a positive training experience. Motivation to complete the apprenticeship was low and too many apprentices passed their planned end date. Employers and apprentices acknowledge the improvements that leaders have made recently to rectify these weaknesses. However, employers recognise that further work is required to further improve the quality of apprentices' training experiences.

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

Following their previous inspection, leaders and managers re-designed the content of their curriculum to focus predominantly on providing a range of healthcare apprenticeships that align to the needs of their local and regional health and care sectors. Leaders are representatives on local council boards and community forums. They promote the benefits of upskilling healthcare employees to help to improve the retention of staff and to tackle skills shortages in the sectors through training.

Managers and skills coaches sequence the new curriculum effectively. They start with training apprentices on their tasks and responsibilities as a care worker, person-centred care, safeguarding, and equality and diversity. This approach helps apprentices to gain important knowledge, skills and behaviours that they can apply to their roles early on in their apprenticeship.

Managers and skills coaches do not use the assessment of what apprentices know and can do at the start of their apprenticeship effectively enough. While apprentices choose relevant optional units that align to the specialisms needed for their settings, skills coaches do not always tailor learning to ensure that all apprentices achieve their full potential.

While most employers understand the need for apprentices to attend their training, it is often difficult currently for apprentices to do so due to the demands at work and staff shortages. In too many instances, this includes off-the-job training. As a result, a few apprentices complete this training in their own time, such as watching a video recording of a masterclass that they were unable to attend. Leaders do not ensure that skills coaches link on- and off-the-job training with employers fully. Consequently, apprentices do not always have the opportunity to practise and apply what they learn in a timely manner.

Skills coaches do not provide helpful feedback to apprentices consistently across all apprenticeships. Feedback often confirms what apprentices have completed and what they need to do next. Consequently, a minority of apprentices do not always understand how they can improve the standard of their work or what they need to do to improve their skills in the workplace.

Leaders and skills coaches do not place sufficient emphasis on the development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills. Skills coaches direct apprentices to use online materials to fill the gaps in their knowledge of these subjects. Those who are motivated to do so, ask their skills coaches for support. While a large number of apprentices have started to pass their English and mathematics qualifications recently, too few apprentices do so on time. The majority of employers support apprentices to practise English and mathematical skills in the workplace. For example, apprentices write residents' notes, create bespoke care plans and administer medication accurately.

Not all apprentices and employers have a good enough understanding of what apprentices need to do to achieve high grades in their final assessments. Consequently, a minority of apprentices are not prepared sufficiently for these assessments or attain the high grades they are capable of achieving.

Apprentices have access to a wide range of relevant, additional resources and 'hot topics' to support their learning and to broaden their understanding of the health and care sectors. However, leaders and skills coaches do not check that apprentices access and understand the resources on offer, such as information relating to substance misuse, the general data protection act (GDPR) and safeguarding.

Apprentices do not receive structured, impartial careers information, advice and guidance on the range of career options available to them within the care sector. They rely on advice and guidance from their skills coaches or on information from links to external sites such as the National Careers Service. The majority of apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of the full range of career opportunities available to them beyond their current apprenticeships.

Leaders and managers have recently introduced appropriate processes to monitor the quality of their apprenticeship provision. They receive detailed and regular reports on quality, compliance and day-to-day business operations that help them to monitor the specific strengths and weaknesses in their provision effectively. While their actions are starting to have an impact on rectifying identified weaknesses, including reducing the number of apprentices who are past their planned end date, they need to significantly increase the pace at which they implement improvements to ensure that the quality of education improves rapidly.

Skills coaches are well qualified and have extensive and up-to-date knowledge and experience of working in the health and social care sectors. Leaders provide opportunities for skills coaches to develop their pedagogical skills and professional practice. However, a few skills coaches do not demonstrate fully how they benefit from this training and how it helps them to improve their training skills.

Leaders recognised that their oversight of apprentices' progress was inaccurate. Consequently, they implemented very recently a new electronic system to support training and to improve the recording and monitoring of apprentices' progress. However, it is too soon to judge its effectiveness.

Skills coaches are supported effectively by their line managers. Managers regularly check how they are feeling and support their welfare, well-being and mental health. They make adjustments where possible to ensure that staff experience an appropriate work-life balance.

Leaders work closely with a non-executive director who provides an independent oversight of the quality of their apprenticeship provision. The non-executive director has substantial experience of leading and managing apprenticeships. He challenges leaders clearly and effectively about their actions to improve the quality of the provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority in everything that they do. They have suitable safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Designated safeguarding leads are highly qualified and have significant experience in supporting the welfare and well-being of others. All staff receive relevant and regular training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders have recently improved their approach to safer recruitment. They carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on all new staff prior to the start of their employment.

Apprentices know how to stay safe and what to do if they have any concerns. They learn how to stay safe at work and keep themselves updated with any new policies and procedures relating to safeguarding in the workplace. However, while apprentices can remember receiving training on the risks of radicalisation and extremism, they have only a vague recollection of the issues and how they relate to their job roles.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should significantly increase the pace at which they implement quality improvement actions to ensure that the quality of education improves rapidly.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that skills coaches use the assessment of apprentices' starting points to tailor the apprenticeship programme fully to apprentices' specific training requirements, to help them achieve their full potential.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that employers release their apprentices for training, including off-the-job training, and that skills coaches link on- and off-the-job training explicitly to ensure that apprentices have the opportunity to practise and apply what they learn in a timely manner.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that skills coaches provide consistent and helpful feedback to help all apprentices to understand how they can improve the standard of their work and their skills in the workplace.
- Leaders and managers should further develop the English and mathematics curriculum to ensure that all apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications on time.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices and employers understand the final assessment requirements fully so that all apprentices attain the grades they are capable of achieving.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance so that all apprentices are fully informed about their next steps.
- Leaders and managers should monitor the impact of staff development activities closely to ensure that they bring about improvements in the quality of training and learning.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices have a clearer understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism in their locality.

Provider details

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Website	ensissolutions.co.uk
CEOs	Stuart Crosby and Mike Gregory
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 July 2019
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by a director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report and monitoring visits. 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 training sessions, scrutinising apprentices' work, seeking the views of apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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