

Inspection of Careshield Limited

Inspection dates:

9 to 12 August 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Careshield Limited is a national independent learning provider, with its head office in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. It received a direct contract to be a provider of apprenticeships in April 2018. Careshield teaches apprentices across England, with most apprentices based in the Northeast, Yorkshire and Humber, East of England, London and the South East.

At the time of the monitoring visit in 2019, there were 145 apprentices studying at level 2 and level 3. Since then, Careshield has had significant growth at levels 2 and 3, and more recently introduced level 4 and level 5 apprenticeships to meet the needs of employers. Careshield teaches standard-based apprenticeships in care work. Most apprentices study level 2 adult care worker and level 3 lead adult care worker. A smaller proportion of apprentices study level 4 lead practitioner in adult care and Level 5 leaders in adult care. At the time of the inspection there were 1,147 apprentices, the majority of whom were aged 19 and above.

Careshield works with 417 employers nationally. The provider does not have any subcontracted provision. There were 212 apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities and no apprentices with high needs.

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

Most apprentices at Careshield enjoy their learning and feel that they are gaining new skills and knowledge. Apprentices, many of whom have not studied for some time, enjoy the challenge of gaining a qualification and feel proud of their achievements. Most apprentices feel that their coaches support them very well with their work and with other issues that they may experience. They value the positive relationships that they have with their coaches and feel that the flexible approach of coaches helps them to fit studying around often complex shift patterns. Apprentices say that they feel more confident in their job roles, communicate better with colleagues and become better at problem-solving because of their apprenticeship. Apprentices state that coaches help them to complete their work when they need it or if they feel overwhelmed.

A few apprentices, however, state that frequent staff changes have resulted in them not feeling supported or making the progress that they could have done. Most apprentices recognise that leaders have worked hard to rectify this, and they feel that there is now more consistent support available. Many apprentices have found studying very demanding alongside their busy work lives. Apprentices benefit from high-quality online resources, which helps them to study independently. A small proportion of apprentices find it difficult to use the online resources and would appreciate more help with their digital skills.

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

Coaches at Careshield do not ensure that apprentices consistently complete their assignment work to scheduled deadlines during the course, and apprentices often do not take their functional skills examinations early enough in their course. They find it challenging to complete these at the end of their apprenticeship. As a result, too few apprentices achieve their apprenticeship programme and too few apprentices achieve within the planned timescales.

A small minority of providers and apprentices do not receive frequent and helpful communication from Careshield, particularly those smaller employers with few apprentices. When changes in coaches have taken place, too often apprentices do not have a replacement coach swiftly enough and managers are not kept informed. As a result, apprentices become demotivated and make slow progress on their apprenticeship. Most employers feel that leaders and managers are highly responsive to their needs, respond swiftly to queries and provide valuable information about apprentices' progress. They work collaboratively to provide a flexible curriculum that enables apprentices to fit their studies around their shift work and other demands. Employers value the increased contribution that apprentices make in the workplace. Senior leaders have fostered strong relationships with employers at a strategic level.

Too few employers attend apprentices' reviews. Although employers are aware of the times of reviews, most do not attend frequently enough. As a result, they do not

have a good understanding of the progress that apprentices are making or how well apprentices' off-the-job training is aligned to the tasks they carry out in the workplace. Employers do not contribute to the planning of the apprentices' future work to ensure that it develops the skills required in the workplace.

Most employers provide apprentices with the appropriate time to complete their off-the-job training. However, in a minority of instances, apprentices choose not to take this time so that they can assist their employers to manage staff shortages. Training managers record the off-the-job training hours and activities completed but do not routinely check that apprentices do this in their working hours. Managers do not check that apprentices have sufficient time during their working hours to complete their English and mathematics functional skills.

Managers and coaches do not plan sufficiently well for apprentices to receive impartial careers advice and guidance. Coaches often discuss with apprentices in reviews what they will do on completion of their apprenticeship, but this is not planned or recorded. When apprentices seek advice and guidance, coaches provide them with expert support to consider the options available to them, for example changing optional units in their apprenticeship to secure a role in a clinical day unit or how to progress on to become a paramedic. Most apprentices understand the opportunities available to them with their current employers. A high proportion of apprentices gain promotion to senior roles, such as shift leaders, because of their training.

Apprentices produce work that is appropriate to the level at which they are studying. In a minority of cases, apprentices' written work is not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a deep understanding of topics. Although most coaches provide apprentices with helpful feedback on their written work, a minority do not ensure that apprentices know what they do well or what they need to do better. Coaches provide helpful verbal feedback to apprentices, which they value highly.

Apprentices attend their taught sessions and reviews frequently. Coaches record apprentices' attendance accurately. They readily rearrange sessions to help apprentices to work around their changing shift patterns. Coaches use reviews effectively to identify gaps in apprentices' learning. They use questioning and professional discussions successfully to check and reinforce learning. For example, coaches use questioning to check how apprentices would manage complaints. They help apprentices to understand how to apply their knowledge in their own workplace and in different contexts.

Skills coaches are well qualified and experienced. They use their vocational expertise well to guide apprentices with tasks. For example, coaches support level 5 apprentices to draft risk assessments and create support plans for a client with a degenerative eye condition. Coaches skilfully encourage apprentices to reflect on their practice and identify how they can improve. As a result, apprentices gain new skills and knowledge and improve their practice in the workplace.

Coaches support the development of apprentices' English skills in the workplace expertly. They support apprentices to understand relevant terminology, including medical terms, which they use appropriately in the workplace. However, too many coaches do not correct apprentices' spelling and grammar in their written work. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same mistakes.

Apprentices work in highly professional environments where they develop relevant workplace behaviours. They understand the need for vulnerable clients to be treated with dignity when they support them to shower, and they know the importance of accurately identifying signs of a stroke, for example. Apprentices become more confident in performing their work competently and become more resilient in working in high-pressure settings.

Coaches benefit from a broad range of relevant staff development activities to help them to improve their practice. They attend mandatory training, such as basic life support, and share good practice through standardisation meetings. Coaches receive training about specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. As a result, coaches support apprentices with learning disabilities confidently. They provide them with extra support hours during their apprenticeship and for the completion of their final assessments. Consequently, apprentices with learning difficulties progress as well as their peers.

Leaders and managers have established a strong vision to educate and train employees in the health and care sector. They have carefully considered the curriculum that they offer so that it meets the needs of the employers that they work with. The curriculum supports employers to retain staff and improve morale within their workforce.

Leadership and governance arrangements are not sufficiently robust to improve the quality of education and training swiftly. Leaders have appointed an external governor, who is experienced in the sector, to provide vocational expertise and challenge. Governors and senior leaders understand the main strengths and areas for development of the business. They assess their performance frequently and put actions in place to secure identified improvements, but they do not secure them swiftly enough. Leaders and managers gather relevant information, such as apprentice attendance data and achievement data. However, leaders and managers do not routinely analyse or use this information effectively to monitor their progress against their improvement targets or to identify emerging weaknesses swiftly enough. Leaders have recently put new procedures and systems in place to rectify this, but it is too early to see the impact.

Senior leaders have high aspirations to provide valuable training for employers nationally. They have invested appropriately to secure improvements, for example in high-quality online learning materials. Apprentices use these resources to extend their learning, for example Parkinson's disease training or stroke awareness.

Apprentices feel safe in the workplace and know how to raise any concerns that they might have. They understand how to keep themselves and their service users safe.

For example, they understand indicators of financial abuse or radicalisation. Apprentices have a very good understanding of fundamental British values such as respect and tolerance. They demonstrate these well in their workplace with colleagues and in their work with vulnerable clients.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They have put in place a broad range of policies and procedures which they use effectively to keep apprentices safe. Managers ensure that staff receive relevant and detailed training at induction and that update training takes place annually. Safeguarding leaders have established beneficial links with external agencies to ensure that their knowledge is up to date.

Leaders have put in place robust procedures to ensure that staff are safe to work with apprentices. Staff involved in recruitment have a good understanding of safer recruitment procedures.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers must ensure that apprentices complete their apprenticeship within planned timescales, including those apprentices who have already passed their planned end dates.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that employers plan effectively for apprentices to receive time to complete their off-the-job training, including studying for their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of the broad range of career options that are available to them on completion of their apprenticeship programmes.
- Leaders must ensure that employers are fully involved with planning apprenticeship programmes and supporting apprentices, including attending reviews and aligning off-the-job training with working practices.
- Leaders and governors need to act promptly to secure the identified improvements required, ensuring that the quality of education and training improves and is at least good.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1280350
Address	Careshield Limited 1st Floor, Bank House Primett Road Stevenage Herts SG1 3EE
Contact number	07943371291
Website	www.careshield.com
Principal/CEO	Christian Greenshaw
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of funded learning, 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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