

Inspection of The Opportunity Group

Inspection dates:

28 June to 1 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Opportunity Group is an independent learning provider that began providing apprenticeships nationally in September 2018. At the time of the inspection, there were 626 apprentices enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships. The majority of apprentices were following the level 3 team leader and level 4 process leader apprenticeships. Most of the remainder were on level 5 operations manager, level 4 intelligence analyst and level 4 associate project manager programmes. There were also a few apprentices on each of the following programmes: level 4 digital community manager, level 5 coaching professional, level 3 food and drink technical operator, level 4 sales executive, level 3 data technician, level 3 customer service specialist, and level 6 financial services professional. All apprentices at the time of the inspection were aged over 18 years.

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

Leaders and managers do not make apprentices and their employers fully aware of the requirements of an apprenticeship. In too many cases, apprentices do not receive sufficient time to complete their apprenticeship in their working hours. Leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices have a clear understanding about the content of the apprenticeship that they are studying. Apprentices too often think that the additional qualification contained within the programme is the most important aspect of their apprenticeship.

Too many apprentices do not attend off-the-job training and, as a result, make very slow progress in developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Too often, facilitators do not know how many apprentices should attend their sessions. Leaders and managers do not monitor attendance and punctuality closely enough.

Apprentices who do attend training sessions benefit from a culture of respect, openness, and honesty during one-to-one sessions with their coaches. Coaches check apprentices' well-being, and they ensure that the sessions are free from workplace distractions and take place in a safe and confidential environment. Apprentices develop their understanding of how to promote emotional well-being and apply this knowledge to develop strategies to promote well-being in their own teams.

Apprentices feel safe and can demonstrate an informed understanding of safeguarding procedures. They know who to contact if any issues should arise, and they can explain the safeguarding processes within their respective organisations.

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

Leaders and managers work closely with employers to provide a range of apprenticeships with the intent to meet the specific training needs of businesses. However, this intent is not consistently realised across the apprenticeships that The Opportunity Group provides.

Too many apprentices leave their programmes early or are significantly beyond their planned end date. Leaders and managers have insufficient oversight of the retention of apprentices or the progress that apprentices make. They do not take swift or effective action to help those apprentices who have fallen behind to catch up with their work.

Leaders and managers pay insufficient attention to the quality of education and training that apprentices receive. They do not have effective processes in place to monitor the quality of the provision or to take action when teaching is not good enough. They do not support staff well enough to complete relevant subject updating or to improve their teaching practice. Leaders have very recently started to improve these aspects of their work but is too early to see the impact of their actions.

Staff do not measure apprentices' starting points well enough to ensure that apprentices are recruited onto programmes that meet their needs. They do not assure themselves of the suitability of the apprenticeship for each individual, but instead enrol all individuals who are put forward for the apprenticeship by their employers. Consequently, a high proportion of apprentices leave before completion of their programme.

Staff do not make good enough use of information from assessments of what apprentices can do as they start their programme to plan to meet their training needs. For example, on the level 4 intelligence analyst programme, facilitators too often focus sessions on the work carried out by one particular employer. This limits the ability of apprentices who do not work for that employer to relate the content to their own workplace.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics qualifications receive support swiftly enough. Too many apprentices who need these qualifications do not receive any teaching to help them gain the knowledge that they need to pass the examinations.

Leaders do not take effective action to ensure that staff meet the needs of apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Too many of these apprentices do not receive appropriate support to enable them to complete their course by the planned end date. Leaders and managers have recently appointed a new manager to assess and support these apprentices, but it is too early to identify any discernible impact.

In a few instances, coaches do not assess apprentices' understanding well enough when they carry out progress reviews. They do not ensure that apprentices have gained the required knowledge, skills and behaviours, and they do not help apprentices to understand where they have gaps in their knowledge and what they need to do to improve.

Staff do not routinely reinforce apprentices' understanding of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Too many apprentices do not understand the potential risks within their local area or risks related to their job roles.

The extent to which apprentices receive high-quality careers guidance is dependent on their individual coaches. Staff provide informal advice in coaching sessions, but they do not provide apprentices with guidance on careers outside of their organisations. Most apprentices are keen to move forward in their careers and some take on more responsibility and gain promotions as a result of their apprenticeship programme.

Leaders and managers appoint staff with appropriate qualifications and experience to teach on the apprenticeship programmes. Apprentices appreciate the knowledge and expertise of their facilitators and coaches.

In most cases, facilitators and coaches plan and sequence the curriculum logically to build apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. On the level 4 intelligence

analyst standard, apprentices first learn core decision-making skills and staff then help them to develop more complex occupational skills, such as covert intelligence gathering. In a few instances, the planning of the curriculum is not aligned well enough to the required knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to achieve the apprenticeship standard.

In the few instances where teaching is effective, apprentices who attend develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours and are prepared well for their end-point assessment. On the level 5 operations department manager standard and the level 4 process leader standard, facilitators deliver useful workshop sessions. Apprentices consider that the approach that facilitators take has helped them to be more reflective about their own job roles. Apprentices' understanding of management and coaching strategies helps them develop empathy and resolve conflict. Apprentices on the level 3 team leader standard learn how to use the Eisenhower matrix to prioritise tasks more effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have clear policies and procedures in place to help keep apprentices safe, which they update annually. They follow up concerns well and in a timely manner. Responses to concerns and interventions are well documented, and records clearly explain the outcome and when the incident has been closed. Apprentices have access to a free 24-hour helpline and counselling service. Leaders and managers liaise effectively with external agencies and support organisations where needed.

Staff responsible for safeguarding are appropriately qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. All staff complete useful training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty at their induction. Staff also benefit from frequent meetings to ensure that they know how to recognise the signs that apprentices are experiencing mental health issues or abuse, or that they are being radicalised.

Safe recruitment practices are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young and vulnerable apprentices. Leaders and managers keep a single central register of staff qualifications and mandatory training and check that they are current and up to date.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices are recruited to appropriate programmes based on their job role and individual needs.
- Ensure that apprentices receive high-quality off-the-job training.
- Provide apprentices and employers with helpful advice and guidance to prepare them effectively for the demands of an apprenticeship.

- Develop appropriate processes to monitor and improve apprentices' attendance.
- Ensure that staff are well supported to improve their pedagogical skills and to receive relevant training to keep them up to date in their subject knowledge.
- Ensure that apprentices' starting points are used effectively to plan individual programmes of study.
- Provide sufficient and suitable support swiftly for apprentices with additional learning needs.
- Implement effective procedures to monitor and improve the quality of education that apprentices receive.
- Take prompt action to help apprentices who have fallen behind to catch up.
- Provide apprentices with rapid support to achieve their English and mathematical qualifications when needed.
- Plan an effective age-appropriate personal development curriculum to prepare apprentices for their next steps in education, training, career, and life in modern Britain.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539267
Address	Walker Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2HL
Contact number	07814 949235
Website	https://theopportunity.global
Principal/CEO	Kate Temple-Brown and Michaela Reaney
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the 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.

Inspection team

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