

Inspection of Bespoke Consultancy & Education Limited

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Bespoke Consultancy & Education Limited (BCE) is an independent learning provider that was established in 2013 to provide training to the social care sector. BCE began offering apprenticeships to levy-paying employers in January 2018. Currently, 239 apprentices are on standards across level 2 adult care worker, level 3 lead care worker, level 4 lead practitioner in adult care and level 5 leader in adult care with 4 completing level 5 leadership in adult care framework. Most apprentices work in care homes in South West England, with a few in the Midlands and London. Nearly all apprentices are over the age of 18.

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

Apprentices continue to be employed as adult care workers because of the new skills, knowledge and behaviours they develop on their apprenticeship. Several have been given additional responsibilities at work and others have gained promotions. However, apprentices who have been studying during the pandemic have become discouraged by the slow progress they have made due to the demands of their work and the changes of assessors they have experienced. As a result, too many have left the apprenticeship without completing their training. Apprentices who have started their training in the past 12 months are making much better progress and benefit from support provided by a designated assessor.

Apprentices develop confidence in communicating with their assessors and people at work, for example being able to have challenging conversations with colleagues on the correct use of protective equipment. They develop health and care skills and knowledge quickly and use them effectively at work.

Apprentices feel safe and understand their duties under safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to report concerns and know to whom they should report them. They follow safe working practices at work and recognise risks and injuries that can occur. They understand the importance of keeping their clients safe and the concept of whistleblowing, and they are confident to report concerns.

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

Leaders have a clear strategic intent to provide health and social care qualifications through apprenticeships to support skills shortages in the sector. They have rightly focused the training they offer on developing skills for care workers through apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5. This offers apprentices opportunities to move on to further training as well as wider opportunities for promotion at work. However, managers are not yet working effectively with employers to jointly design the curriculum for each apprenticeship, for example by ensuring the selection of wider specialist skills and knowledge are included, such as end of life care and dementia, to meet the skills needs of the apprenticeship roles in each business.

Leaders have rightly focused on employing tutors in difficult to appoint areas such as English and mathematics. They recognise that apprentices have been making slow progress with their English and mathematics due to high staff turnover and periods where apprentices have not had any tutors. Assessors are very experienced in their subjects and use this well to relate theory to practice. As a result, apprentices respect their assessors and value their support and the experiences they share.

Leaders have recently recruited a quality assurance manager, delivery manager and business manager to improve quality of teaching, outcomes for apprentices and relationships with employers. Although they have plans to implement quality

systems such as learning walks and observing training, it is too early to see the impact on the quality of education. Similarly with employer relations, too many employers are unclear of the progress their apprentices are making or do not fully understand the importance of apprentices receiving their full training entitlement.

Staff speak to employers and apprentices at the start of their training to ensure that they understand the requirements of an apprenticeship and know what the training will involve. Assessors complete assessments with apprentices to identify what they can already do and what they know at the start of their training. However, assessors do not use this information well to design and plan each apprentice's curriculum or to provide timely additional support. For example, apprentices who have worked in care for some time are repeating skills and knowledge that they have already acquired. Reasonable adjustments are made for apprentices with support needs, such as providing computers, additional time for submission of work and increased one-to-one sessions. These adjustments enable them to make good progress between assessor visits and catch up on missed work.

Too many apprentices have not received their full entitlement to training. Due to pandemic-related staffing issues in adult care, employers have not always fulfilled their agreement to release apprentices to complete training. The vast majority of apprentices do attend monthly training sessions and one-to-one reviews with their assessor, but they are struggling to complete work and research as they have to do this in their own time. As a result, nearly a third of apprentices have slipped behind their expected rate of progress and are now beyond their planned apprenticeship end date.

Assessors provide a safe and welcoming learning environment. They support apprentices well through the monthly training workshops and monthly one-to-one sessions. Assessors link training closely to apprentices' job roles, which helps them put theory into practice, for example distribution and record-keeping of medicines and how to apply safeguarding procedures at work. Apprentices put into practice swiftly the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they have developed in training for example recognising the different protective equipment to use in different situations, how to use a hoist safely to move clients and recognition of key symptoms such as signs of a stroke.

Level 3 apprentices benefit by developing team leading skills at work and are gaining confidence in using them for example being able to support newly appointed colleagues by ensuring they follow correct procedures when lifting and moving clients. Apprentices on the level 5 apprenticeship develop their confidence in management skills, for example being able to explain more clearly to service users and colleagues the purpose and importance of policies and procedures.

Most apprentices have a highly positive attitude to their apprenticeship and work. They are highly passionate about their work and care for others and have developed high levels of resilience while working in challenging circumstances. They are well motivated to learn new knowledge, skills and behaviours to improve their workplace practices. They value the opportunity to meet monthly, where they learn alongside

their peers and share best practice. This enables them to gain effective information about how other care businesses use quality care practices successfully.

Leaders have not provided the apprentices who need them with the opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills. There has been a gap in providing teaching to those needing to develop their English and mathematics, and achieve functional skills qualifications. As a result, too many apprentices who have completed their health and social care certificate have left their apprenticeship without achieving all of the components.

Although assessors' subject knowledge is very good, their skills in teaching are less well developed. They do not teach lessons that inspire apprentices and they do not check what apprentices have learned. Assessors do not plan challenging and interesting activities for apprentices to practise their developing skills and knowledge. Apprentices do not get the feedback they need from assessors so that they know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve their skills and knowledge. The standard of apprentices' coursework is appropriate for the level of programme they are studying and has improved over time, particularly at level 5. Apprentices' written work demonstrates that they are becoming reflective practitioners, and extended written work is structured well.

Leaders and managers do not thoroughly check the quality of training, and therefore they cannot set actions for improvement to help assessors become better teachers. Too many assessors do not have the skills to help apprentices achieve what they are capable of in the planned timescale for their apprenticeship.

Leaders rightly recognise the need to develop effective and appropriate careers guidance as apprentices make progress and achieve. They have an action plan to provide this service but it is too early to see the impact. Currently, apprentices have not considered discussing their aspirations with their assessors and are determining what they need to do to achieve their ambitions, for example to move on to specialist roles such as supporting end of life care, for clients with dementia, or nursing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have implemented appropriate policies and procedures that staff use effectively, to safeguard apprentices. Referrals are responded to swiftly to ensure the apprentice is safe. Managers use their good links with local external agencies to ensure they have the most recent information about local developments and safeguarding campaigns. This information is shared with staff in a monthly newsletter, which is shared with apprentices to increase their understanding. A recently appointed second designated safeguarding lead is experienced and has completed appropriate training to carry out the role. Leaders complete the necessary checks when recruiting and appointing staff.

Apprentices feel safe. They learn about and use safe working practices at work and understand thoroughly the importance of providing a safe environment for their clients and service users. For example, they ensure that they use appropriate sanitisation procedures and correct techniques when supporting and lifting people.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should swiftly provide assessors with training to help them become effective teachers and enable them to provide high-quality teaching to their apprentices.
- Leaders must ensure that staff and assessors use the information about apprentices' starting points to plan each apprentice's training so as to avoid repeating , knowledge, training and skills they can already do and know.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices receive their full training entitlement so that they can make the progress of which they are capable and complete their apprenticeship on time.
- Leaders should link the planning and teaching of English and mathematics to the apprentices' training so that they can improve these skills rapidly and in a relevant context.

Provider details

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Principal/CEO	Alison Webber
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 December 2019

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by Alison Webber, 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 and employers, 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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Teresa Gardner	Ofsted Inspector

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