

The Growth Company Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 53233

Name of lead inspector: Alastair Mollon, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection date: 1 September 2022

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Lee House
90 Great Bridgewater Street
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit focused on safeguarding arrangements and was undertaken as outlined in the further education and skills handbook.

The Growth Company Limited (TGC) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1989. The company provides apprenticeships, adult learning programmes and education programmes for young people. Apprenticeship programmes focus on the priorities of the Greater Manchester Work and Skills Strategy and the needs of the sub-regional labour market. Adult learning programmes are primarily aimed at meeting the needs of unemployed adults and those wishing to return to study to progress to higher education. At the time of the visit, TGC had approximately 270 learners on education programmes for young people, 448 learners on adult learning programmes and 1,442 apprentices on a wide range of programmes.

This was an unannounced safeguarding monitoring visit following concerns that had been reported to Ofsted. The purpose of the visit was to assess how effective the safeguarding arrangements and safer recruitment at the provider are.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that they comply with relevant safeguarding requirements and recruit staff safely? Reasonable progress

Leaders complete safer recruitment checks when they recruit new staff. The human resources team complete additional checks and liaise effectively with recruiting managers to ensure they follow safe practices throughout the recruitment process. They check that the company 'role register' has appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and pre-employment checks in place for each new recruit. All recruiting managers receive appropriate interview training and guidance. Leaders ensure that there are appropriate numbers of staff on interview panels and checks in place to explore candidate employment history. Where appropriate, interviewers follow up on any gaps in employment to assure themselves of the staff's background. All employment offers are subject to DBS clearance, qualifications, references and right-to-work checks that recruiters complete prior to candidates starting work.

Leaders have devised a range of suitable policies and procedures that provide staff, learners and apprentices with clear guidance around safeguarding, the prevention of terrorism and safer recruitment practices used at the provider. The safeguarding panel reviews the safeguarding and associated policies regularly. It updates the policies to reflect best practice and alignment to legislative changes and national guidance.

Leaders ensure that the safeguarding and welfare of learners and apprentices are a priority. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), deputy DSL and safeguarding team have received the appropriate training and have the knowledge and experience to carry out their roles effectively.

The DSL and their team benefit from regular update training on relevant topics such as self-harm and suicide awareness to enhance their knowledge around issues that affect learners and apprentices. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding across the organisation.

Leaders ensure that there are well-trained, experienced designated safeguarding officers across the education and skills team. All staff benefit from mandatory training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty during their company induction. They complete annual refresher training as part of their professional development programme. Leaders track staff's training effectively and report any concerns around knowledge and compliance to ensure swift action where needed.

The DSL has established a wider network of useful contacts, including the North West regional prevent coordinator and the local police, to improve their knowledge of emerging issues and localised threats, including county lines and knife crime. The company safeguarding panel provides monthly training on a range of themes, including far-right radicalisation, increased vulnerabilities and involuntary celibates, to keep staff informed of safeguarding issues and updates.

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