

Inspection of The Chief Constable of Sussex

Inspection dates:

25 to 28 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Chief Constable of Sussex (Sussex Police) began training apprentices in March 2019. At the time of the inspection there were 68 apprentices, all aged over 19, studying the level 4 police community support officer (PCSO) apprenticeship standard. All apprentices are employed by Sussex Police as PCSOs. They are based at police stations across East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. Sussex Police has commissioned an external provider to teach functional skills in English and mathematics to the very small number of apprentices who need to achieve these qualifications.

Sussex Police and Surrey Police work in partnership. They have a joint learning and professional development department and supervisory structure that covers both forces.

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

Apprentices follow a clearly structured programme that builds their understanding of the PCSO role rapidly. They quickly develop the skills and confidence to become a valued member of the neighbourhood policing team and contribute positively to their local communities. For example, when apprentices identified concerns about drug dealing in the neighbourhood, they arranged for an increased conspicuous police presence in the area. As a result, drug dealing in the locality is much reduced.

Apprentices maintain very high standards of personal and professional behaviours. They ensure that the police code of ethics is upheld in all they do, including challenging the behaviours and attitudes of others to ensure bullying and harassment are not tolerated. They attend training sessions punctually and engage well in class discussions. Apprentices are consistently positive about their studies and well motivated to learn. As a result, almost all complete the apprenticeship within the planned time. A high proportion achieve distinction grades.

Almost all apprentices remain with Sussex Police when they complete their apprenticeship. They receive appropriate and timely advice and guidance about their next steps in the service. As a result, many make swift progress along their career path. For example, a high number of PCSO apprentices successfully apply to become police constable degree apprentices.

Apprentices benefit from access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs, the gym network, and societies such as the gender equality group and the LGBTQ+ network. However, most, apprentices make little use of these opportunities during their training phase.

Apprentices feel safe. They know how to stay safe, and how to raise concerns if they have them. They attend helpful, structured debriefing sessions with colleagues and professionals when they experience traumatic incidents at work, such as attending a death or road traffic accident. Consequently, apprentices feel well supported and understand the importance of looking after their mental health and well-being.

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

Leaders and managers have planned the curriculum logically so apprentices build knowledge, skills and behaviours effectively, based on what they know and what they can do. As a result, apprentices are prepared appropriately before they go out on patrol with more experienced colleagues. Apprentices start with an intensive period of effective classroom-based training to understand fundamental aspects of the PCSO role, such as communication skills, decision-making and maintaining professional standards. They then put this into practice well, as they are deployed to work in local police stations.

Leaders and managers maintain a strong focus on the welfare and well-being of staff. As a result, staff, including apprentices, feel well supported. Staff, many of whom face challenging situations daily, benefit from helpful counselling services, mental health first aiders and a welfare dog scheme, which they greatly appreciate.

Leaders assess apprentices' starting points well, early in the training programme. This enables them to rapidly identify apprentices with additional learning needs. As a result, they swiftly put support such as specialist software or extra tuition in place, which enables these apprentices to achieve in line with their peers.

Trainers and assessors use their professional experience skilfully to help apprentices link learning to situations they face in their job role. They identify apprentices' strengths and areas for improvement well, through careful use of role play scenarios and workplace observations using body-worn cameras. They use clear and helpful demonstrations to ensure that apprentices quickly master the skills to efficiently use systems to gather local intelligence about crime.

Trainers and assessors ensure apprentices understand how to identify and appropriately act on signs of radicalisation, extremism and criminal activities in their local areas. For example, apprentices who identified right-wing paraphernalia when conducting house-to-house investigations reported it to senior staff in the division. Apprentices who recognised signs of drug use when conducting a child welfare visit made appropriate referrals to social services.

Staff do not set apprentices sufficiently developmental targets during reviews or make sure they know what they need to achieve by the next session. They link targets to workbook completion and do not focus sufficiently on workplace skills and behaviours. Assessors do not set resubmission deadlines for apprentices when work needs improvement. Most apprentices are strongly self-driven and make good progress regardless of this. However, a very small number of apprentices are not clear on what they need to do to improve or how to make swift progress.

Leaders rightly recognise that they do not communicate sufficiently well with line managers in the divisions to enable them to plan the support that apprentices need. A small number of line managers did not receive information about how well their apprentice performed in initial training or about the level of mentor time required to undertake assessments. As a result, a few managers do not understand how to best support their apprentices during transition from the foundation learning stage to the independent patrol stage.

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate systems to manage the quality of functional skills education provided by subcontractors. Where challenges arise, such as the quality of teaching, managers deal with this quickly and weaknesses are swiftly remedied. As a result, most apprentices make good progress with their functional skills and achieve their qualification in good time.

Governance is effective. A well-established structure of committees and boards, which run collaboratively with Surrey Police, provides a clear mechanism for

monitoring and oversight of the quality of education. Senior leaders provide appropriate challenge which leads to positive improvements. For example, senior leaders challenged the apprenticeship team to recruit a more diverse group of PCSO apprentices. As a result, staff introduced targeted roadshows and are already starting to recruit apprentices who better reflect the neighbourhoods and community groups they serve. When senior leaders identified a trend of increasing mental health concerns, they trained staff as mental health first aiders, so they now provide more effective support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place clear policies and procedures which contribute positively to keeping apprentices safe. They capture and monitor safeguarding concerns appropriately.

Leaders have implemented a robust vetting process, which ensures staff are safe to work with apprentices. All staff, including apprentices, undertake frequent, comprehensive training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Trainers and assessors build their understanding of local risks into their teaching well. As a result, apprentices have a strong awareness of risks in the communities they serve and know how to keep themselves and others safe from radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and training staff should improve the communication with apprentices' managers to enable better support for apprentices during the transition between training phases and throughout their deployment.
- Leaders and managers should provide all apprentices with purposeful, well-focused and developmental targets which enable them to know how to improve.
- Leaders and managers should ensure all apprentices know about, and have access to, the range of professional development opportunities, clubs, networks and societies provided by Sussex Police.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2554104
Address	Sussex Police, Malling House Church Lane Lewes East Sussex BN7 2DZ
Contact number	01273 475432
Website	www.sussex.police.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Joy Chant
Provider type	Employer Provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Functional Skills UK Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the governance manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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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