

Inspection of GP Strategies Training Ltd

Inspection dates:

23 to 26 August 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

GP Strategies Training Limited (GPSTL) is an independent learning provider with a head office in Stockport, Greater Manchester. GPSTL is part of the GP Strategies Corporation, which is owned by the Learning Technologies Group PLC. GPSTL began delivering training in 1997 and has training centres in Stockport, Blackpool, Halifax, London and Bodmin. GPSTL does not subcontract any of its provision.

GPSTL provides training for apprentices and adult learners in adult care, childcare and education, and business and management. At the time of the inspection, there were just under 4,700 apprentices enrolled on apprenticeships. Around 2,700 apprentices were enrolled on standards-based and framework apprenticeships in adult care at levels 2 to 5. Around 1,300 apprentices were enrolled on standards-based and framework apprenticeships in childcare and education at levels 2 to 5. Approximately 700 apprentices were on standards-based and framework apprenticeships in business and management at levels 2 to 5. There were 166 adult learners enrolled on short online courses in healthcare and business.

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

Many apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship on time. At the time of the inspection, almost half of apprentices had not completed their apprenticeship within the planned timescale. Apprentices told inspectors that they have been delayed in gaining their qualifications, and a few have missed opportunities for promotion or further employment. Several have been unable to complete mandatory regulatory qualifications that they need at work. Leaders maintain that the impact of COVID-19 was to blame for delays. However, leaders' ineffective plans to enable apprentices to catch up has impeded these apprentices' career opportunities.

Too many apprentices, particularly those in the adult care sector, have had multiple skills coaches due to staff turnover at GPSTL. These apprentices become demotivated and disengaged. Leaders do not know how many apprentices remain in learning. Too many apprentices contacted during the inspection stated that they have left the apprenticeship, are no longer working in the sector or are on apprenticeships at other training providers.

Too many learners on adult learning programmes lose interest early in the course and do not complete their course on time. This is because there is a limited variety of online learning materials for the extensive reading required to complete the course successfully. Many learners find independent learning and/or the online learning platform too difficult to navigate. Skills coaches do not have high enough expectations for adult learners, and many do not adhere to submission dates for their work. Consequently, over a quarter of adult learners have not completed their course on time.

Apprentices who are in regular contact with their skills coach gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours, build their confidence and take on additional duties and responsibilities. For example, early years apprentices become key workers for children in their care and engage effectively with parents and carers. Lead adult care apprentices instil the importance of handwashing and use of personal protective equipment to reduce the spread of infection. These apprentices become valued members of their teams.

Apprentices feel safe. They apply their knowledge of safeguarding in the workplace. Adult care apprentices use appropriate procedures to report safeguarding incidents at work.

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

Leaders have developed apprenticeship programmes that meet the needs of local and national employers. This includes apprenticeships in adult care and childcare to meet the significant demand across the country for skilled workers in these sectors. However, leaders have failed to provide a high-quality curriculum that meets the needs of all apprentices and adult learners, including those with special educational

needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which prevents them from achieving their potential.

Leaders rightly acknowledge that their online adult learning programmes do not meet the needs of learners. Skills coaches do not engage adult learners effectively in learning. Most counselling and team-leader learners have not completed any of their coursework. The few learners who do complete work make slow progress and have not completed their courses on time. Leaders have very recently introduced new adult learning programmes in adult care. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of these programmes.

Leaders have planned most of their apprenticeships to gradually build apprentices' knowledge during their apprenticeship. For example, lead adult care apprentices first learn about safeguarding, infection control and health and safety before they learn more complex topics such as medication, care planning and leadership. However, in many cases, apprentices do not attend taught sessions or have frequent enough contact with their skills coaches to enable them to fully understand the content of the apprenticeship.

Leaders do not plan the functional skills English and mathematics curriculum effectively. Skills coaches are too slow to identify apprentices requiring functional skills and in directing them to appropriate learning. Too many apprentices requiring these qualifications do not begin learning until they are a considerable way through their apprenticeship. These apprentices are delayed in completing their final assessments.

The majority of skills coaches do not provide constructive feedback to apprentices. Feedback is often incomplete, or when it is completed, it is overly positive. Most apprentices and adult learners do not know what they need to do to improve their work.

Attendance at taught sessions is poor. Too many apprentices on most programmes are unaware of, or do not attend, taught sessions for their apprenticeship or functional skills in English and mathematics. Many apprentices miss essential learning and do not make progress towards completing their apprenticeship or English and mathematics examinations.

Skills coaches do not routinely carry out effective reviews of apprentices' progress. Often, reviews are too infrequent and do not contain specific targets to help apprentices to understand what they need to do next. The majority of employers do not attend reviews and are therefore unaware of the progress that apprentices make. This means that skills coaches are unable to assist apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours or help them to catch up when they fall behind.

Leaders do not provide effective support for apprentices and adults learners to catch up when they fall behind. Almost half of apprentices have not completed their apprenticeship on time, a few of whom are several years beyond when they should

have completed. Leaders do not know which apprentices remain in learning and which have left the programme. Leaders' plans for apprentices to complete their apprenticeships are ineffective.

Leaders and skills coaches do not ensure that the few apprentices with identified SEND receive the support they require to make good progress during their apprenticeships. Their needs have not been met, and consequently a few have left their apprenticeships early.

Leaders do not provide an effective personal development curriculum for most apprentices and adult learners. An online learning hub, with topics such as healthy eating, equality and diversity and fundamental British values, is available for apprentices to access. However, accessing these resources is optional and knowledge of these topics is not sufficiently checked during progress reviews. As a result, most apprentices and adult learners cannot recall this learning and are not broadening their knowledge beyond the apprenticeship programme.

Leaders do not provide effective careers advice and guidance. Most apprentices and adult learners are unaware of further study or career opportunities available to them, such as promotion or roles in other sectors.

Leaders' quality assurance processes are ineffective. They are not rigorous or robust enough to enable them to identify quickly areas for improvement. Leaders' actions are having a limited impact on reducing the number of apprentices who are past their planned end date or on improving the quality of education apprentices receive. They have failed to halt the decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection.

Governance is weak. Board members are suitably experienced and qualified to carry out their roles. However, leaders do not provide them with accurate or sufficiently detailed reports that focus on the quality of education, or the progress that apprentices make. As a result, the challenge that board members provide is not having a sufficient impact on improving the quality of education that apprentices and adult learners receive.

Skills coaches and trainers are well qualified in their sector and use their industry experience to relate theory to practice. For example, adult care tutors use their own experience of first aid to explain resuscitation. Early years skills coaches use technical questions to prompt apprentices to reflect on how they apply safety protocols in children's nursery settings.

Apprentices who remain in learning and attend taught sessions learn new knowledge and skills. For example, level 2 adult care apprentices learn how to use slide sheets when moving people in their care. Early years apprentices learn how to plan exercise activities for children in their care. Team leader apprentices learn how to implement new processes in the workplace to improve efficiencies and increase motivation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe. They know whom to contact if they have any worries or concerns. Leaders swiftly follow up safeguarding referrals and monitor them effectively.

Designated safeguarding leads use their knowledge of safeguarding and local risks at their centres across the country to provide appropriate training for staff and apprentices on topics such as involuntary celibates, sexual consent and knife crime. All staff benefit from mandatory training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, which they use to safeguard apprentices and learners.

Leaders follow safe recruitment practices and ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

Leaders do not provide appropriate training for apprentices and adult learners on the 'Prevent' duty. Most apprentices and adults have little or no knowledge of how to spot the signs of radicalisation and extremism or the dangers they could face.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must take immediate action to identify which apprentices are still in learning and which apprentices are no longer employed so that they can target effective support to help current apprentices to complete their apprenticeships rapidly.
- Leaders should take action to increase apprentices' attendance rapidly at all taught sessions so that they can access all of the knowledge they require to be successful in their apprenticeships.
- Leaders should redesign their functional skills English and mathematics curriculum to ensure that apprentices requiring these qualifications are identified early in the programme and directed to appropriate study.
- Leaders should ensure that skills coaches provide constructive developmental feedback to apprentices and adult learners so that they know what they have done well and how to improve their work.
- Leaders should ensure that skills coaches carry out regular, effective progress reviews with apprentices and employers so that employers can identify opportunities for apprentices to practise and master their knowledge, skills and behaviours at work.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices with SEND are supported effectively and their needs are met so that they can be successful in their apprenticeships.
- Leaders should provide a personal development curriculum that apprentices and adult learners access and understand so that they broaden their experiences beyond their programmes. This should include effective careers advice and

guidance so that apprentices and adults are aware of other opportunities, such as further learning, promotion or careers in other sectors.

- Leaders should implement effective quality assurance processes and procedures and use these so that they are able to identify quickly areas of weakness in the quality of education and take appropriate action to resolve these rapidly.
- Leaders should provide detailed and accurate reports to the board so that the board can scrutinise and challenge leaders effectively to improve rapidly the quality of education that apprentices and adult learners receive.
- Leaders should urgently provide appropriate training to apprentices and adult learners on the 'Prevent' duty so that they are fully aware of the dangers they may face from radicalisation and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51954
Address	Floor 1 Kingsgate House Wellington Road North Stockport SK4 1LW
Contact number	0161 513 9202
Website	www.gpstl-apprenticeships.co.uk
CEO	David Martin
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	21 April 2016
Subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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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