

# The Opportunity Group

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	2539267
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Kim Bleasdale, His Majesty's Inspector
<b>Inspection dates:</b>	21 and 22 November 2022
<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Walker Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 2HL

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

This is the first reinspection monitoring visit to The Opportunity Group following the inspection that took place from 28 June to 1 July 2022 and which found the provider to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.

### Themes

#### How effective have leaders' actions been in supporting apprentices who have fallen behind to catch up?

#### Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, most of the apprentices who had not completed their apprenticeships on time have now successfully completed. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to ensure that the remaining apprentices achieve within the next few months. However, leaders have not provided support quickly enough for a few apprentices. This has meant that these apprentices have exceeded their planned end dates.

Leaders identify apprentices who are at risk of falling behind in their learning more swiftly than they previously did. Apprentices fall into the 'at risk' category if they miss more than one workshop, fall behind in their progress or have a health concern. Leaders have weekly meetings with coaches to discuss each cohort of apprentices. In addition, leaders and coaches meet fortnightly to discuss the progress of each apprentice. This helps coaches to put effective interventions rapidly in place if the need arises, such as agreeing additional support from apprentices' line managers or increasing coaching visits.

Most apprentices feel well supported by their line managers and their coaches. They are motivated to complete and are committed to meeting the target dates set by coaches. They know what they need to do to complete their apprenticeships. Coaches ensure that apprentices are fully prepared for their final assessments. Apprentices practise presentations for their projects and have mock interviews.

#### How much progress have leaders made in improving their processes for monitoring and improving apprentices' attendance?

#### Reasonable progress

Leaders have strengthened their processes for monitoring and improving apprentices' attendance. Coaches routinely complete an attendance register at the start of each workshop session. They closely monitor apprentices' attendance at one-to-one coaching sessions. This provides appropriate attendance data for leaders to monitor and hold apprentices and employers to account for any absences. Coaches send an

electronic invitation to apprentices for each workshop session. If an apprentice declines any sessions, coaches escalate this immediately to the employer. Coaches remind apprentices about forthcoming workshops using employers' established internal communication systems. Apprentices watch recordings of workshop sessions if they are unable to attend their training.

Leaders identified that the absence of a number of apprentices coincided with busy periods at their work. In recognition of this, they no longer deliver workshops during these busy periods. Instead, apprentices carry out self-study activities, which are closely monitored by coaches. This ensures that apprentices continue to make progress towards developing the required knowledge, skills and behaviours.

As a result of leaders having strengthened their processes for monitoring and improving attendance, the large majority of apprentices now attend their training. However, as leaders rightly acknowledge, although apprentices' attendance has improved, it is still too low.

### **To what extent have leaders implemented effective procedures to monitor and improve the quality of education?** **Insufficient progress**

Leaders continue to strengthen their quality assurance and improvement processes. They are currently reviewing their curriculum to make sure it is taught in a logical order. Leaders plan to introduce a survey to obtain feedback from apprentices on the quality of their training. They have agreed an improved strategy to evaluate coaches' teaching skills. However, they have yet to implement these processes.

Leaders have not tailored the curriculum to apprentices' job roles well enough. Intelligence analyst apprentices who work for a local council found that the content was more relevant to those apprentices working in the police force. Leaders have recently amended the course content to better reflect apprentices' diverse job roles.

Leaders ensure that coaches receive appropriate training. Intelligence analyst coaches update their knowledge of evidence-based policing. Team leader and operations management coaches develop their knowledge of the coaching process. This improves coaches' occupational and subject knowledge. However, leaders have not provided training to develop coaches' teaching skills further. Functional skills coaches would like training to help them support apprentices who speak English as an additional language and apprentices with additional learning needs.

Most apprentices are positive about the quality of the training they receive. They find their workshops informative. Apprentices feel well supported by their coaches.

A few apprentices do not receive sufficient time for their off-the-job training. These apprentices say that their employer does not give them any time to attend their workshops. Consequently, they find it difficult to manage their heavy workloads

because of what they need to do for their apprenticeships. A few line managers do not provide opportunities for apprentices to practise and master the skills they need at work.

**Have leaders ensured that high-quality teaching is in place to provide apprentices with the English and mathematics support they need to achieve their qualifications?** **Reasonable progress**

Functional skills coaches provide appropriate teaching and helpful support to apprentices. They organise the course content in a logical order. For example, in mathematics, apprentices initially learn about fractions. After this, they learn about area, space and algebra.

Apprentices complete an appropriate assessment at the start of their programme, which identifies what they already know. Coaches use this information effectively to tailor the curriculum to meet apprentices' individual needs. For instance, a few apprentices lack confidence to speak in discussions. Coaches have routine discussions where apprentices ask and answer questions. This helps to build apprentices' confidence prior to their examinations.

Coaches accurately monitor the progress that apprentices make in developing their functional skills. They adapt their teaching to meet apprentices' individual needs. A few apprentices who struggle to retain information in their long-term memory receive weekly one-to-one sessions. This helps them to remember more over time.

Functional skills coaches provide apprentices with precise feedback that indicates what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. They carefully explain mathematical concepts. Coaches help apprentices to practise and improve the accuracy of their work. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices pass their qualifications at their first attempt.

Previously, leaders and managers did not ensure that apprentices started their functional skills learning early enough in their programmes. This impeded apprentices' progress. Going forward, leaders plan to ensure that apprentices start their functional skills learning at the start of their programmes.

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