

# Inspection of Damar Limited

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Damar Limited (Damar) is an independent learning provider. Damar specialises in providing education and training to apprentices in professional and business services across England. The head office is located in central Manchester. Apprentices learn through a blend of live online workshops and group coaching sessions.

At the time of the inspection, Damar had 1,033 apprentices. Apprentices study standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2 to 6. The vast majority of apprentices study apprenticeships in the business, administration and law sectors. Around three quarters of apprentices study at level 3. Just over one third of apprentices study the level 3 business administrator standard and just under one third study the level 3 paralegal apprenticeship. Most apprentices are aged over 19 years, and a few are aged 16 to 18 years. The provider works nationally across nine regions.

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

Apprentices find Damar a great place to learn. They enjoy the calm and positive online learning environment. Apprentices describe their coaches as kind, helpful and very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They appreciate how responsive their coaches are to any queries that they have. Apprentices welcome the range of resources and materials that they have access to online.

Apprentices benefit from a curriculum that builds their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Level 3 travel consultancy apprentices learn about time zones and airport codes early on in their apprenticeship. They develop their competence and confidence at work, where they use this knowledge to plan and book trips for clients. Employers appreciate the skills that apprentices bring to their business.

Most apprentices are ambitious to achieve well on their apprenticeship. They use the online learning resources to check their understanding and prepare for their next written assignment or group coaching session. Level 3 business administrator apprentices make improvements to their mock assignments to achieve the highest grade. Most apprentices feel well prepared for their final assessment.

Apprentices feel safe. They know the signs to look out for regarding harmful sexual behaviours, including inappropriate comments online. Apprentices behave respectfully and professionally during live online learning sessions. They dress appropriately with their cameras and microphones on while listening actively to others' contributions.

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

Directors, leaders and managers are aspirational for their apprentices. Apprentices enjoy a high-quality education in a caring and supportive culture. In functional skills mathematics sessions, apprentices feel comfortable to ask their coaches for help about concepts that they find difficult to understand. They appreciate the respectful way in which coaches support them. Apprentices improve their confidence.

Leaders and managers have selected suitably ambitious curriculums that meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. Level 4 data protection and governance practitioner apprentices understand the detail surrounding subject access requests. They communicate effectively with senior leaders the reasons why and how they need to protect their systems. Level 6 chartered legal executive apprentices benefit from membership of a professional body, which enables them to develop their professional networks.

Leaders and managers order the topics that the apprentices learn logically. Level 5 operations or departmental manager apprentices start by learning about self-awareness. They move on to learn about building relationships followed by managing people.

Coaches are well qualified and have relevant industry experience. They use their specialist knowledge and sector expertise well so that apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need for their next steps. Level 3 paralegal apprentices become skilled in providing legal support in their chosen pathway, such as criminal law or conveyancing. They competently prepare legal documents and manage client records. Apprentices value the experience and knowledge that their coaches bring.

Leaders and managers ensure that they assess what apprentices already know and can do before they start their apprenticeship. Coaches set apprentices appropriate individualised targets based on this information, which they revisit frequently to assess apprentices' progress. They use this information to plan and coordinate future on- and off-the-job training with the apprentice and their employer. Most apprentices make good progress on their apprenticeship.

Leaders provide a range of appropriate and effective support for apprentices with additional learning needs. Coaches use the information from apprentices' initial assessments to provide extra resources and plan suitable support. For example, apprentices benefit from subtitled video resources, extra coaching sessions, and read-aloud voice technology. Apprentices with additional learning needs make at least as good progress as their peers.

Coaches use a range of teaching activities such as quizzes, questioning and presentations to check apprentices' understanding of topics. Level 6 chartered legal executive coaches use questioning about client care and the code of conduct to encourage apprentices to reflect on their own practice. Apprentices identify in detail the steps they would take in response to an individual who is at risk.

The majority of coaches do not routinely or consistently provide developmental feedback to apprentices so that they know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Where coaches provide detailed feedback, apprentices improve the quality of their work.

Most apprentices develop the English and mathematical skills that they need for their apprenticeship. For example, level 3 paralegal apprentices accurately value claims and carry out noise level and audiometric calculations. Leaders have focused on improving the progress that apprentices make in their functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. Apprentices studying functional skills English make good progress to achieve their functional skills qualifications. However, in mathematics, too many apprentices do not pass their qualification first time. Leaders have put actions in place to address this weakness, but it is too soon to see the impact.

Apprentices benefit from a personal development curriculum that includes fundamental British values, mental health awareness and sustainability. Level 3 business administrator apprentices use a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis tool to assess where improvements can be made to the work environment. They present new ideas to their managers

about technologies to reduce paper usage. Apprentices train colleagues how to use online data storage systems instead of printing documents.

Staff provide apprentices with appropriate careers information and advice at the start of their programme that ensures that they are enrolled on the right apprenticeship. Ongoing careers guidance is provided by coaches on an ad hoc basis. Consequently, not all apprentices benefit from a range of independent advice about their next steps. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that they need to provide a more planned approach to careers guidance. They have recently appointed a careers coach to implement a careers curriculum.

Leaders and managers are fully aware of where they need to make improvements. They use performance data to monitor actions and to address any underperforming groups of apprentices. Leaders recognise that a minority of apprenticeship achievement rates were too low last year. Managers have made significant changes to address this. They have altered the curriculum, made staffing changes and have stopped working with some employers. Leaders' and managers' actions are beginning to have a positive impact.

Governance arrangements are long established. Board members use the detailed information that leaders provide to guide the strategic direction of the organisation. The non-executive director provides effective support and challenge to senior leaders so that they continue to improve the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Directors, leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding their apprentices. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies are appropriately trained. They have suitable experience and seniority to undertake the role. The DSL and deputies respond promptly to safeguarding concerns and refer apprentices for external support, where needed. They undertake regular checks on apprentices whom they identify as being vulnerable.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff and apprentices receive regular updates on key safeguarding issues, such as sexual harm and mental health. They share case studies about the main extremist threats in cities near to where apprentices live and work. However, too many apprentices remain unaware of the local risks they may encounter.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders and managers should ensure that coaches provide feedback to apprentices that develops and extends their knowledge and understanding.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they improve the achievement rates for apprenticeships that were too low, including the first-time pass rates in functional skills mathematics.
- Leaders and managers should provide high-quality independent careers guidance so that apprentices understand the range of career opportunities available to them.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	51469
<b>Address</b>	111 Piccadilly Manchester M1 2HY
<b>Contact number</b>	0161 480 8171
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.damartraining.com">www.damartraining.com</a>
<b>Managing director</b>	Jonathan Bourne
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 to 7 April 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the divisional manager, 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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