

Dentrain Professionals Ltd

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number: 2556371

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Dentrain Professionals Ltd was inspected in June 2022. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Dentrain Professionals Ltd is an independent learning provider located in Bolton, Greater Manchester. It provides training for people who work in the dental sector. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 127 apprentices in learning. Of these, 71 apprentices were aged 19 or over, with the remainder aged 16 to 18. All apprentices study the dental nurse apprenticeship at level 3. Most apprentices are based in dental practices in the North West region of England. A few are employed in the West Midlands and the North East and Yorkshire and Humber regions.

Themes

How much progress have managers made in developing a suitably ambitious curriculum to meet the needs and starting points of apprentices, helping them progress beyond the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship?

Reasonable progress

Managers undertake an accurate assessment of what apprentices know and can do when they start their apprenticeship. They use this information to plan different curriculum pathways for apprentices to follow. This means that some apprentices can complete their apprenticeship in a shorter timeframe. Those apprentices with support needs are given additional time, if required. Learning and development officers (LDOs), employers and apprentices review apprentices' progress together every eight weeks and ensure that most apprentices make the progress expected of them.

Apprentices, who are all new to dental nursing, benefit from a logical, well-sequenced curriculum. LDOs start by teaching apprentices the importance of health and safety, key legislation and the fundamental skills they will need in order to perform their dental duties effectively. Apprentices then move on to basic dental treatments, such as amalgam, composite fillings and denture impressions, before they consider more complex treatments. Consequently, apprentices develop substantially new knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout their apprenticeship.

Managers and LDOs provide extra support sessions, so that apprentices can remain on track when learning new topics such as oral hygiene. They help apprentices to progress and develop their knowledge and skills beyond the apprenticeship, for example by making sure that apprentices fully understand the principles of the

General Dental Council (GDC) standards and how to apply these to their work. Apprentices enjoy their learning and quickly understand the importance of putting patients first and behaving professionally.

LDOs introduce apprentices to the requirements of their end-point assessment (EPA) from the start of the apprenticeship. LDOs set knowledge tests, observe apprentices in their dental practice and conduct interviews so that apprentices are better prepared for their final assessment. Apprentices appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their skills and confidence.

Managers ensure that the curriculum prepares apprentices well for their future ambitions in the dental sector. Apprentices understand how to progress to roles as orthodontic therapists and oral health educators or to take on extra responsibilities in their practices.

How much progress have managers made in supporting learning and development officers to use a broad range of teaching and assessment strategies that challenge apprentices to know more, remember more and do more? Reasonable progress

Managers recruit LDOs who are experienced dental nurses, have an assessor qualification and have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Since the previous inspection, managers have designated a lead LDO to help apprentices prepare for their EPA. An LDO is also in place to support those apprentices with additional learning needs.

LDOs use a range of teaching and learning activities to help apprentices understand topics. They break down complex information, so that apprentices can process what they have learned and relate it to their practice. Apprentices recall confidently how to prepare for the administering of a crown. They explain how they select and set out the equipment needed for the procedure, such as the aspirator, putty and wax strip. They mix the putties together separately before combining them for the dentist to use. They clean down their work area after the procedure, including taking the bib and glasses from the patient.

Apprentices develop their confidence because of their apprenticeship. They are confident in the preparations that they make and the equipment they need for even the most complex procedures, such as a root canal treatment. They use technical language fluently to describe the additional equipment they need, such as points and index locators.

LDOs do not always use assessment effectively to check for gaps in apprentices' knowledge, for example when they use questioning or set mock examination papers. Managers have identified that their appraisal and observation processes need refining to allow them to identify the specific improvements that LDOs need to make in their teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Employers appreciate the additional support that apprentices receive from their LDOs. This allows apprentices to make sustained progress from their starting points and to complete the apprenticeship to a high standard. Employers value what apprentices bring to their practice. They find apprentices to be highly organised and confident in using their own initiative as they have sound underpinning knowledge.

How much progress have learning and development officers made in setting apprentices challenging individual targets to ensure that they know how to improve and are well placed to obtain the grades that they are capable of achieving?

Reasonable progress

Managers continue to develop LDOs' skills in setting apprentices challenging targets, so that they understand how to improve their work. Apprentices produce work of a high standard. Around a fifth of apprentices who have completed their apprenticeships most recently have achieved distinction grades in the knowledge test or interview.

LDOs mostly set targets that are meaningful and challenge apprentices to reach their potential. Where appropriate, targets are linked carefully to workplace practices. For example, apprentices are asked to relate one GDC standard each day to their activities in the practice. This allows apprentices to link their theoretical knowledge and practical skills effectively.

Employers appreciate that apprentices are supported by LDOs to help them complete the apprenticeship in a timely fashion and to a high standard. LDOs involve employers in progress reviews, and employers have a secure grasp of the content of the curriculum and the progress that their apprentices are making. Employers work with LDOs to enable apprentices to practise the areas they need to improve or gain confidence in, such as in their understanding of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health requirements, in their dental practice.

Apprentices benefit from clear feedback from their LDO, which they use to improve their work. For example, they include more detail in their oral health assignments about the post-operative advice they need to give to patients. They understand the reasons why they need to provide more dietary advice to patients, such as on limiting fruit juices or sugary drinks. Apprentices use their knowledge to respond effectively to patients' questions, such as when advising against drinking coffee when a clear retainer is in place as it may cause staining to the teeth.

At times, LDOs set apprentices targets that are too generalised or vague, and consequently these do not help apprentices to understand how to improve. Managers recognise that this remains a priority for further improvement.

How much progress have managers and learning and development officers made in planning the coordination of on- and off-the-job training more effectively, so that apprentices can practise the knowledge and skills they have learned on the apprenticeship at their place of work?

Reasonable progress

Managers plan the curriculum effectively so that apprentices can practise in work what they learn off the job. For example, apprentices study the anatomy of the tooth and the reasons why patients may need to have fillings. They then prepare the equipment for fillings in their dental practice and learn how this procedure can prevent root canal treatments or extractions. Apprentices understand the impact that poor diet, lack of brushing or smoking can have on their patients' teeth.

Employers have a secure understanding of apprentices' off-the-job training. They understand the sequence and content of the curriculum and how these allow apprentices to build up their skills incrementally over time. Employers work closely with LDOs to understand the progress that apprentices make. They work with LDOs to fill any gaps in apprentices' developing knowledge, skills and behaviours to support them to practise and perfect their learning in the workplace.

Managers and LDOs have a thorough understanding of apprentices' training in their dental practices. After their induction, apprentices spend their first few weeks learning about decontamination processes. Employers then give apprentices the opportunity to work with hygienists on scaling and polishing. They are then trained in supporting dentists with simple treatments before they move on to more complex treatments, such as crown preparation and root canal treatment. In some more specialised practices, apprentices are trained to support dentists with implant work. The majority of employers ensure that on-the-job training is tailored to meet the needs of individual apprentices.

Managers recognise that they need to have more formal oversight of LDOs' recording of on- and off-the-job training so they can review the sequencing of the curriculum and adapt it, if required, to meet the needs of apprentices and employers further.

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