

Inspection of Independent Training Services Limited

Inspection dates: 6 to 9 June 2023

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

Information about this provider

Independent Training Services Limited is a national training provider with its head office based in Barnsley. It is owned and is a subsidiary of Barnsley College. It provides apprenticeship training from level 2 to 5, predominantly for the adult care and early years education sectors. Most apprentices live and work in South Yorkshire, with a small number of apprentices, who work for large, national care home chains, based in other regions across England. At the time of the inspection, there were 334 apprentices. Independent Training Services Limited also provides a small number of level 3 adult learning programmes, including accountancy and personal training. At the time of the inspection, there were 42 learners on programmes located nationally, but mainly in the north of England.

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

Apprentices and learners have positive attitudes towards their learning. They value the support that they receive to help them to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They are motivated to do well and achieve the best possible grades. Apprentices understand that employers value qualifications and that having these will help them to develop or advance their career more swiftly.

Learning coaches encourage apprentices to take on additional activities at work that enhance their ability to cope with new or uncertain situations. This helps apprentices to develop their confidence and resilience when tackling more demanding roles. For example, level 5 operations management apprentices are encouraged by their coach to lead complex activities at work and now feel able to prepare effectively for external quality audits, manage budgets and control medical supplies.

Apprentices and learners attend their training sessions well and are motivated to succeed. If they cannot attend a learning session, they contact their teachers and learning coaches to let them know. Staff provide apprentices and learners with sufficient opportunities to catch up on their missed work by, for example, arranging additional training sessions for them.

Staff provide apprentices and learners with useful information about being respectful and responsible citizens. Apprentices in care settings, for example, understand the importance of being discreet and sensitive when working with older, vulnerable clients. Adult learners studying gym and fitness qualifications know that it is important to be mindful of those from different cultures and of different genders who may have a range of expectations of what constitutes close, personal space.

Apprentices understand how to stay safe in the workplace. They learn early in their apprenticeship about how to deal with vulnerable clients in care settings and the signs that their clients may be at risk of abuse, such as bruising that cannot be accounted for. Adult learners are taught about being safe at night when leaving gym premises and the risks associated with working on quiet business parks.

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

Leaders have a clear curriculum intent to provide apprenticeship and adult skills training for local and regional businesses. They provide specialist training predominantly in the adult care and professional services sectors. Leaders provide flexible training arrangements to meet the needs of employers, learners and apprentices, such as short, flexible adult learning programmes and apprenticeships for the health and care sector, where there are very high staff shortages. They have developed professional partnerships with a large, national mental health charity which has become one of their preferred delivery partners.

The curriculum is logically sequenced to enable apprentices and learners to develop new knowledge, skills, and behaviours over time. When required, learning coaches

adapt the delivery of the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of both apprentices and employers. For example, learning coaches on the level 5 leader in adult care apprenticeship brought forward teaching about change management techniques and effective communication so apprentices could effectively manage the additional challenges of having to change staff rotas at short notice.

Leaders have taken decisive action over the last year to tackle weaknesses that they identified in their apprenticeship provision. These include improving the performance management of teaching teams and implementing a bespoke programme of professional development. They have also successfully recruited and trained new teaching staff and added new, essential roles such as team leaders and functional skills specialists. Apprentices now receive a consistently good quality of education, and the proportion of apprentices withdrawing has reduced significantly.

Leaders continue to focus their efforts on reducing the proportion of apprentices who continue beyond their planned end date. The actions that they have taken include being more rigorous with employers about the need for apprentices to have sufficient time to complete their off-the-job training. The proportion of apprentices who continue past their end date has reduced by half, but is still too high.

Staff have extensive vocational experience. They use their experience well to contextualise learning that helps apprentices and learners understand the links between what they learn and how to apply this in practice. For example, learning coaches on the level 2 adult care worker apprenticeship have significant experience of nursing in adult care settings. They use their expertise to teach apprentices about topics such as end-of-life care and how best to deal sensitively with close family members during their relatives' final days.

Leaders provide frequent and relevant professional development for staff, which includes training to enhance their teaching skills. They identified the need to improve the academic rigour of higher-level apprenticeship programmes and to enhance the quality of progress reviews. The training that staff received has been successful in addressing these concerns.

Curriculum staff teach apprentices and learners well. They use a range of teaching strategies such as reflective practice and one-to-one coaching sessions that help develop apprentices' and learners' knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. For example, on the level 3 diploma in gym instructing and personal training course, adult learners complete useful reflections to identify what they would do differently in future coaching sessions with their clients.

Learning coaches prepare most apprentices well for end-point assessment. They provide apprentices with mock assessments, embed presentations into formative assessments and discuss how to reach merit and distinction grades. However, in a few instances, such as on the level 5 operations and departmental manager apprenticeship, learning coaches do not provide apprentices with information early enough to ensure that they understand fully what is expected of them once they reach the end of their apprenticeship.

Learning coaches provide frequent and tailored support for those apprentices who need to achieve functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. Apprentices make sustained progress towards achieving these qualifications. Learning coaches also support and encourage apprentices to use precise technical vocabulary in their written work and professional discussions. For example, they ensure that level 3 early years educator apprentices accurately use terminology about holistic development in early childhood development.

Staff provide apprentices and learners with an appropriate range of careers advice and guidance. Apprentices know, for instance, that they can progress into more senior care worker roles, further education, and training such as degrees, and have opportunities to pursue careers into affiliated roles in areas such as nursing. Many apprentices, such as those on the level 3 leader in adult care apprenticeship, are now motivated to continue their studies at a higher level.

Trustees hold leaders effectively to account. They provide appropriate challenge and support using their extensive expertise as trustees, governors and senior leaders from business and education. Trustees have a clear oversight of the actions that leaders are taking to improve the quality of provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in safeguarding. Staff undertake comprehensive safeguarding training so that they know how to keep learners and apprentices safe, including how to make referrals to those responsible for safeguarding. Leaders work closely with the local authority, police and other agencies so they have up-to-date knowledge of the risks that learners and apprentices may face.

Leaders deal appropriately with safeguarding concerns when they are raised. They have a low threshold to help early identification of potential safeguarding concerns, including slow progress and low attendance.

Leaders undertake appropriate checks to ensure that staff are suitable to be employed at the provider. They have a single central record that clearly identifies the dates that identity, right to work in the United Kingdom and security clearance checks take place.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices have a thorough understanding of the requirements for end-point assessment from the beginning of their programme.
- Ensure that action to reduce the number of apprentices who go beyond their planned end date is sustained.

- Ensure that all apprentices receive sufficient time to complete their off-the-job training and studies.

Provider details

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Website	https://www.independenttrainingservices.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Yiannis Koursis
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2017
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing 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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