

# London Cactus Limited

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

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

London Cactus Limited (LCL) 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.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were fewer than five apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships in adult social care at levels 2, 3 and 5. Most apprentices are employed at a care agency, LCL's sister company.

### Themes

#### **What progress have leaders made in implementing an effective staffing structure so that apprentices receive good-quality training?**

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders took the sensible decision to pause recruitment to the apprenticeship programme after the previous inspection. They recognised that they had not recruited apprentices appropriately. Leaders have recruited well-qualified and experienced staff who are industry professionals from a range of healthcare settings. These newly recruited staff teach and support apprentices effectively, which apprentices value.

Staff attend relevant and useful training that prepares them well to plan and teach sessions. For example, assessors complete training in sensitive topics, such as female genital mutilation, which helps them to discuss this information with apprentices at appropriate points in their teaching. Leaders supply training for assessors to use audio recordings to provide feedback to apprentices, and assessors use this effectively. Although assessors now complete level 2 qualifications in English, leaders have not provided them with enough support to develop the quality of the feedback they give to apprentices in writing.

Leaders have put in place sensible quality assurance processes to monitor and improve the quality of teaching. For example, leaders frequently sample the quality of apprentices' written work, which they jointly review with assessors. Leaders undertake occasional observations of training sessions and provide useful verbal feedback to assessors. However, leaders do not always formalise areas for improvement into action plans for assessors. As a result, assessors are not working towards improving all their areas for development.

Leaders have trained staff in career advice and guidance so that they can give new apprentices the right information and advice before they start their programme. Leaders now meet with apprentices and their managers to explain and set expectations for all aspects of the apprenticeship programme. As a result, the few apprentices whom leaders have recently recruited are well informed about the expectations of their training.

**What progress have staff made to ensure that apprentices receive the support they need to develop their written English skills?**      **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken appropriate action to ensure that most apprentices receive sufficient help to develop their English writing skills. Apprentices benefit from frequent marking and feedback on their written work. This helps apprentices to understand what they have done well and where they need to improve their written work. Assessors ensure that apprentices know how to structure their assignments appropriately. For example, apprentices include a clear context and introduction to their assignments and use referencing correctly.

Apprentices on the leader in adult care level 5 apprenticeship mostly produce work to an adequate standard. Their written work shows how they have gained specific knowledge in their subject area over time. For example, they clearly explain the stages of team development, refer to relevant leadership theorists, and describe how they apply this knowledge effectively at work.

Assessors do not always identify grammatical errors in apprentices' work. For example, they do not direct apprentices to use plurals, commas and capital letters accurately in their writing. This is because leaders have not ensured that assessors' own written feedback is grammatically correct. Too often, this includes errors.

Leaders have recruited a suitably qualified English tutor to support apprentices who need to complete qualifications in English. Apprentices now have access to lessons and online learning resources to help them prepare for their examinations. However, apprentices do not always attend lessons or access the materials frequently enough. As a result, apprentices do not pass their examinations on the first attempt.

**What progress have staff made in providing effective feedback at reviews so that apprentices know the progress they are making during their programme?**      **Insufficient progress**

Leaders have been too slow to implement effective progress reviews. They have not made sure that staff who complete progress reviews fully understand the purpose of these. Assessors do not spend sufficient time with apprentices to discuss their progress in all aspects of the apprenticeship programme.

Assessors focus on the progress apprentices make towards their accredited qualifications. However, assessors do not encourage apprentices to reflect on the development of their skills and behaviours over time, nor do they discuss with apprentices' line managers how apprentices apply their learning at work. Too often, apprentices' line managers are not present during the progress review, and apprentices do not contribute enough during the discussion. As a result, apprentices know what work they have outstanding for their qualifications, but they do not know how much progress they have made in other areas of the programme.

In reviews, assessors do not provide apprentices with enough support or information about their final assessments. Apprentices are very unsure of what to expect during these assessments. Leaders have been too slow to build this support into the curriculum. As a result, apprentices do not know how to gain high grades in their final assessments.

Assessors do not use progress reviews effectively to provide targeted support for apprentices who have failed their English and mathematics examinations. Apprentices are not always clear on what they failed on in their examinations or what they need to do to improve.

Assessors provide good pastoral support for their apprentices. In reviews, they encourage apprentices to believe in themselves. They support those who have learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, well and offer alternative ways for them to record their work. As a result, apprentices develop the confidence to continue with their studies.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in implementing a system of governance that provides sufficient external challenge and scrutiny and holds leaders and managers to account for their improvement actions? Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have recruited a governing board that has the necessary skills and experience to hold them to account. External governors have suitable expertise in leadership and in education, health and social care. Governors are well informed about the provider's strengths and most of the areas for development. For example, leaders added additional resources to support apprentices' English writing following intervention from governors. However, leaders do not always provide governors with sufficiently detailed information in advance of meetings so that they can prepare suitably challenging questions.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to rectify most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, they introduced a quality assurance process to check and improve the quality of training. Their action plan and improvement targets focus on the remaining relevant priorities - for example, ensuring that the current apprentices receive the right and intense support they need

to help them complete. However, not all actions have had the impact that leaders expected. For example, participation and achievement in English and mathematics remain low.

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