

Inspection of Alpha Care Agency Limited

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Alpha Care Agency Limited trades under the name Alpha Gateway College (AGC). AGC is an independent learning provider based in the London Borough of Haringey. AGC specialises in apprenticeships and adult courses, predominantly within the health and care sector. At the time of the inspection, 14 apprentices were on framework apprenticeships studying level 5 higher care leadership and management. A further 127 apprentices were on standard-based apprenticeships, mainly in health and social care, and early years, from level 2 to level 5. Of these, 58 apprentices were studying the level 3 lead adult care worker, 28 apprentices were studying the level 2 adult care worker and 18 apprentices were studying the level 4 children, young people and families practitioner. There were a small number of apprentices studying the level 5 leaders in adult care, the level 5 children, young people and families manager, and the level 3 early years educator apprenticeships.

There were 44 apprentices studying functional skills mathematics and 39 studying functional skills English. All apprentices were over 18 years old.

There were 48 loan-funded learners, mostly on business management and health care courses.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy studying at AGC. They arrive on time and the majority attend and participate well in the taught aspect of their programmes. Adult learners have a positive attitude to learning and the majority achieve their qualifications. Apprentices value the diploma qualification included in their apprenticeship as it provides them with a license to practise. However, too few continue to complete all parts of their apprenticeship standard.

Apprentices and learners do not receive sufficient planned impartial careers advice and guidance. Assessors support apprentices and learners so that they are clear on the qualifications and skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers. However, too few learners and apprentices understand or receive sufficient information about study choices available to them, such as further or higher education.

Apprentices and learners value the support they receive while at the provider. Assessors support apprentices to develop new skills, confidence and essential knowledge to be able to become active citizens in the communities in which they live. Assessors promote opportunities for learners and apprentices to learn about fundamental British values through a range of activities linked to their chosen career aspirations. For example, assessors train apprentices how to care with dignity and compassion for clients from different cultures. As a result, most learners and apprentices develop an appreciation and understanding of respect and tolerance, which they apply well to their learning, personal lives and work.

Apprentices and learners do not benefit from well-planned personal development opportunities. Assessors include topics such as managing finances, keeping mentally well and maintaining healthy personal relationships in their sessions. However, this is not frequent enough. As a result, too few apprentices and learners explore these themes in a meaningful way.

Apprentices and learners feel safe, including while working online. Assessors include topics on online safety in sessions effectively. For example, they discuss the threat to young people from criminal gangs who try to communicate with them through online platforms. However, assessors do not explain the local risks that apprentices and learners need to be aware of effectively. As a result, too few apprentices and learners understand the threats posed by radicalisation and extremist views.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for choosing the apprenticeships and adult provision they teach. Leaders commit to helping people in the local community who are most disadvantaged, and often new to the country. Leaders plan a curriculum that provides the first rung on the ladder for learners and apprentices to gain useful skills, knowledge and experience in key employment sectors such as adults' and children's care.

Leaders have not managed the transition from apprenticeship frameworks to apprenticeship standards effectively. Leaders have not made sure that employers and apprentices understand the full expectations of standards-based apprenticeships, including the final assessment. Leaders have faced significant difficulties in supporting a high proportion of apprentices through to their final assessments because of the impact of COVID-19 on the sectors they work with. They have also faced challenges with employers who have not continued to support apprentices once they have completed their mandatory qualifications. As a result, although the majority of apprentices successfully achieve the diploma qualifications, only a few continue to complete their full apprenticeships.

Assessors plan and teach the programmes in a sensible order. Leaders work with employers to make sure that trainers teach learners the skills they need to be successful. For example, employers request that apprentices quickly learn about communication and the meaning and value of person-centred care before moving on to legislation and leadership models. In adult programmes, assessors teach basic business fundamentals before moving on to marketing and organisational structures. As a result, apprentices and learners develop skills and knowledge over time. The majority of apprentices retain their jobs and a few gain promotions. Many adult learners go on to study their preferred courses in higher education.

Assessors use their teaching and industry-relevant skills effectively in order to help learners and apprentices develop new knowledge and skills. For example, assessors break learning down into manageable chunks of information and use everyday business language so that learners understand their explanations. Sports assessors use practical demonstrations to make sure learners develop the correct techniques when setting up a bench press safely. As a result, apprentices and adult learners can recall and apply their new skills in the workplace.

Leaders and assessors provide effective support for apprentices and learners with special educational needs. For example, assessors adapt assessment methods for learners with writing difficulties. They give them the option to hold professional discussions to assess their skills and knowledge rather than writing an essay. Assessors on adult learning programmes provide learners with additional support with their spelling, grammar and verbal communication. This helps learners with their work and in their personal lives. As a result, learners with special educational needs grow in confidence and make progress in line with their peers.

Leaders have not ensured that the teaching of English and mathematics takes place early enough in the apprenticeship programme. Leaders recognise this issue and have taken effective action to support apprentices. For example, assessors develop apprentices' mathematics skills by setting scenarios such as measuring and administering prescription drugs and highlighting the importance of capturing detailed correct case notes when dealing with clients. First-time pass rates have significantly improved. However, the delays in completing English and mathematics qualifications cause too many apprentices to go over the planned end date for their apprenticeships.

Leaders provide effective professional development for staff. Assessors value the support and professional development opportunities they receive. For example, leaders have provided training for assessors to improve the quality of the feedback they give learners and apprentices. As a result, the vast majority of learners and apprentices know what they need to do to improve their work.

Leaders do not have the capacity to swiftly identify and tackle issues in the quality of training that apprentices and learners receive. For example, leaders recognise that the level 3 business programme is too short and does not provide learners with sufficient opportunities to meet with business leaders. Leaders have been slow to put in place effective tracking systems so that they can provide support to apprentices who need it most. As a result, too many learners and apprentices are behind with their training.

Governance is not effective. Governors use their business, education and finance skills to support leaders to plan the strategic direction of the provision. However, they do not provide sufficient support and challenge to leaders on key performance indicators, such as outcomes and oversight of data. As a result, leaders are not getting the support they need to improve the quality of training that learners and apprentices receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that apprentices and adult learners have access to personal development opportunities, including high-quality impartial careers advice and guidance that informs them about further and higher education opportunities.
- Make sure that assessors plan and teach apprentices English and mathematics functional skills earlier in their programme so that apprentices can achieve their qualifications in a timely manner.
- Make sure that employers and apprentices are better informed and prepared for their final assessment so that more apprentices achieve their apprenticeship.
- Make sure leaders put in place effective processes to track learners' and apprentices' progress so they can put in place effective support for those who are falling behind with their studies.
- Make sure that apprentices and learners understand the risks associated with extremist views and radicalisation and how these relate to their job roles and daily lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58538
Address	Alpha Care Agency Limited Tottenham Town Hall Town Hall Approach London N15 4RY
Contact number	020 8527 1627
Website	www.agcollege.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Audrey Meguille-Soyam
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 17 September 2021
Main subcontractors	None

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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