

# Founders and Coders CIC

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

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	2656257
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<b>Inspection dates:</b>	18 and 19 September 2024
<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Founders and Coders CIC was inspected in July 2023. 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 visit, there were 43 apprentices in training; 19 of these were studying on the level 4 software developer apprenticeship and 24 on the level 7 artificial intelligence (AI) data specialist apprenticeship. Apprentices work in a range of organisations, including IT consultancies, charities, local authorities, corporates, and other public bodies.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders and managers made in working more closely with employers to individualise the curriculum for each apprentice, including taking into consideration apprentices' English and mathematics skills?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders and managers make sure that the curriculum is tailored very well to meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. Leaders and managers collaborate closely with employers to align the training with both their business needs and apprentices' learning goals. For example, when employers need apprentices to use specific code for back-end development, such as servers and applications, managers incorporate this well into the curriculum. Subsequently, apprentices develop relevant knowledge and skills and apply these to good effect at work.

Employers plan activities at work very effectively that support apprentices' progress. Most employers participate regularly in quarterly review meetings, where they plan projects to refine and develop apprentices' skills. For example, AI apprentices complete valuable projects such as building smart search plug-ins and AI tools for educational purposes. Employers appreciate the significant contributions apprentices make to their organisations.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have implemented a strategy to only recruit apprentices who have English and mathematics qualifications at the level required for their training. Leaders and managers make sure that English and mathematics are effectively embedded in the curriculum that apprentices follow. For example, apprentices' English skills are developed through presentations they create.

A subject specialist teaches mathematics on the AI apprenticeship. Where AI apprentices need additional support to understand complex mathematical concepts, like machine learning algorithms, they receive expert one-to-one guidance to do so.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in training facilitators to teach apprentices effectively and check apprentices' understanding?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders and managers make sure that facilitators have the skills and knowledge to effectively teach apprentices and assess their progress. Facilitators complete professional development activities that include training on topics, such as assessment for learning, pedagogy, curriculum design, and online teaching techniques. Subsequently, facilitators develop their teaching and assessment skills well. Managers make sure that they visit teaching sessions and give developmental feedback to facilitators that helps to improve the quality of their teaching. Facilitators feel well supported in their roles.

Facilitators have highly relevant and up-to-date industry experience. Apprentices value the high level of expertise that facilitators bring to their role and appreciate the expert support that they provide, such as guidance on fine-tuning techniques. Facilitators check effectively that apprentices remember what they have been taught. They provide apprentices with clear explanations of concepts, such as how to use code to train AI to better generate an image from a word. They break down concepts into bite-size chunks that are easy for apprentices to understand.

Facilitators use a variety of strategies to check apprentices' understanding. For example, they use questioning effectively and, in workshops, apprentices frequently present the projects and challenges they complete to each other. Facilitators and apprentices' peers give useful feedback on both their technical knowledge and their presentation skills. When apprentices need to, they have additional one-to-one sessions with facilitators to recap on what they have been taught. Leaders and managers make sure that all course content and additional learning materials are available to apprentices on an online platform. Apprentices make good use of these resources, which include tests and quizzes of their knowledge and provide them with instant AI feedback on their answers.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in monitoring more closely apprentices' progress and attendance and providing timely and expert support to help more apprentices finish their apprenticeship and achieve their qualifications?**

**Significant progress**

Managers, newly in post at the time of the previous inspection, are now well established. They make sure that, at the start of their training, apprentices and employers fully understand the expectations and demands of the training, including attendance. Facilitators monitor apprentices' attendance and engagement closely and intervene effectively if they decline. Subsequently, apprentices' attendance and participation in all aspects of their programme are high.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers make sure that they closely monitor apprentices' progress across the two standards. For AI apprentices, managers have designed and introduced a bespoke online platform that tracks the skills, knowledge, and behaviours that apprentices develop. It includes a good range of information on apprentices' progress, such as their engagement with online learning, off-the-job training, attendance, and completion of work. This helps facilitators identify apprentices who may be struggling with aspects of the training. On these occasions, they take swift and effective action to provide apprentices with the additional support they need.

Facilitators know apprentices well. They frequently provide detailed reports about the progress apprentices make to their line managers. Apprentices make good progress, develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours well and a high proportion achieve their apprenticeship.

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