

VH Doctors Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

VH Doctors Limited operates as 'the learning enterprise' (TLE) which is the training and development team of Virgin Care Limited. Among a wide-range of training activity the TLE team manages a number of levy funded apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit 126 apprentices were on one of five standards-based programmes. The largest number were on the level 5 assistant practitioner programme, with smaller numbers on senior healthcare support worker, team leader and business administration, all at level 3, and customer service practitioner at level 2. A very small number of business administration apprentices were just about to complete their framework programmes.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Virgin Care directors have used their strong governance arrangements to ensure that TLE is supported and challenged to introduce apprenticeships successfully. Leaders see apprenticeships as a vital addition to the broader training and education provided by TLE to ensure that staff develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours the business needs.

TLE managers ensure that apprenticeships are tailored to meet individual and business needs. They carry out thorough recruitment procedures for new or existing employees to ensure that they are placed on the right programme. This ensures that apprentices can develop the substantial new knowledge and skills they need in the workplace.

Managers have ensured that end-point-assessments (EPA) are in place for all five standards-based programmes. Apprentices are aware of the content and structure of their apprenticeships and when and how they will be assessed during their EPA.

Trainer assessors prepare apprentices nearing the end of their programme effectively for their EPA.

Assistant practitioner apprentices benefit from a very well managed partnership with Derby University, which provides the course materials for this programme.

Most apprentices benefit from extensive programmed learning time each week. Managers and trainer-assessors monitor this requirement effectively, but it can take too long for apprentices to catch up on learning time when they have been diverted to other duties. For example, assistant practitioner apprentices miss learning time when called upon during upsurges in patient numbers during the winter. TLE managers recognise the need to ensure that managers plan and implement this catch-up time more swiftly.

Managers monitor apprentices' progress effectively and ensure that trainer-assessors help apprentices who have fallen behind to catch up. However, they do not monitor the progress of different groups of apprentices, for example by gender or ethnic background. As a result, they are unaware if any groups of apprentices do not progress as well as others.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Most apprentices are on track to succeed within planned timescales. A few apprentices are expected to achieve earlier than their planned completion date. Apprentices develop good practical skills and gain additional qualifications, such as a care certificate, which enhances their employability. Trainer-assessors provide effective support to develop the personal, social and communication skills that apprentices need to improve their performance at work.

Managers have implemented effective processes to evaluate the quality of training. As a result, they provide tutors and trainer-assessors with improvement targets following observations of sessions, and challenge and support them to improve. This process is helping tutors and trainer-assessors to improve their teaching and assessment practice.

Inspectors found that apprentices interviewed during the monitoring visit were highly motivated, were enjoying their training, and found the training to be very relevant to their job roles. Apprentices were keen to develop in their chosen careers and were clear about how their apprenticeship will help them do this. As a result of being on an assistant practitioner programme, they were able to gain new skills and do higher-level work such as removing sutures, taking blood and inserting catheters.

During teaching, learning and assessment sessions, trainer-assessors check apprentices' understanding well with skilful questioning and frequent reviews of apprentices' work. Staff monitor apprentices' spelling and grammatical errors and support apprentices effectively to improve their written English skills. Trainer-

assessors use the electronic recording system well to record assessments, training and reviews. Workplace managers take part in, and make positive contributions to, apprentices' reviews.

Apprentices' work is generally of a high standard and many achieve marks at distinction level. However, during reviews, assessors do not agree targets grades with apprentices early enough in their programmes to provide them with additional motivation to continue to work hard. The targets which trainer-assessors set with apprentices focus well on identifying for apprentices the units of their programme they need to complete, but do not give adequate guidance regarding their broader personal, English and mathematics skills. This slows apprentices' potential progress in developing these broader skills.

Apprentices who are required to take functional skills examinations in English, mathematics or information and communication technology use online learning packages and workbooks to prepare for examinations. Trainer-assessors provide support, but this is too late in apprentices' programmes to help them develop the skills they need in the workplace and to be confident about passing their examinations.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A very strong safeguarding culture permeates the company and TLE and, as a result, suitable safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Managers review and update these policies frequently.

The appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead is well known to apprentices as the point of contact, should they have any concerns. There are no safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding lead does not record minor concerns affecting apprentices other than keeping copies of any related emails; trainer-assessors tend to retain this information. As a result, concerns or trends which might escalate to bigger problems cannot be easily identified and monitored.

Managers focus well on ensuring that staff who work with apprentices are safe to do so. They check staff references appropriately and carry out appropriate checks on all staff who have contact with apprentices. Checks are refreshed at suitable intervals.

Managers have identified the risks related to the 'Prevent' duty and developed effective policies to safeguard apprentices. Apprentices have a reasonable awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and how these dangers challenge both their safety and British values.

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