

Ultima Skills Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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 ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy.

This is the first focused monitoring visit to Ultima Skills Ltd following the publication of the monitoring visit report for new apprenticeship providers in November 2018. Safeguarding was ineffective in November 2018.

The findings of the visit are outlined below.

Theme

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

Leaders and managers have worked diligently to improve safeguarding at Ultima Skills Ltd (Ultima). Leaders and managers swiftly set about rectifying the weaknesses identified by inspectors at the previous monitoring visit. The effective implementation of an action plan for improvement has resulted in all weaknesses being successfully addressed.

The development and implementation of rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures by managers, including for the 'Prevent' duty, ensure that staff, employers and apprentices are now aware of, and are able to follow, company processes to report safeguarding concerns.

The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) at the previous monitoring visit is now the deputy DSO. The new DSO and the deputy DSO have both completed appropriate training at level 3. The DSO has also completed additional safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training to strengthen her understanding of all aspects of safeguarding. The DSO has begun to foster closer relationships with local safeguarding agencies to further strengthen safeguarding arrangements. These include the safeguarding board for Wigan, the multi-agency safeguarding hub for Greater Manchester and Greater Manchester Constabulary 'Prevent' teams.

At the time of this monitoring visit, there have been no safeguarding referrals. The documentation in place to make referrals is appropriate and includes a simple yet effective flowchart for staff to follow. The DSO is currently developing an electronic tracking system for the recording and monitoring of safeguarding referrals. The system is still in the initial stages of development.

Leaders and managers have thought carefully about what information should be included in the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment. They have evaluated effectively the risks relating to radicalisation and extremism in the locality of the Ultima offices and areas where apprentices are located, for example Bradford and Leicester. With support from key partners, leaders and managers have developed and implemented a thorough 'Prevent' duty risk assessment that identifies and mitigates the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Apprentices' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism is improving. Online training materials and videos ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. Managers have reviewed and updated the self-study safeguarding handbook to provide apprentices with a more thorough understanding of safeguarding. This is yet to be introduced, as leaders and managers have not recruited any new apprentices since the previous monitoring visit. Assessors routinely ask apprentices specific questions about the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding during progress reviews. However, they do not clearly record the impact of this on apprentices' understanding. For example, assessors do not identify what learning has taken place or how apprentices can apply their learning in the workplace and in their personal lives.

Priorities for improvement

- Introduce the revised safeguarding training handbook to new apprentices when they are recruited to enable apprentices to develop a good understanding of safeguarding.
- Ensure that assessors exploit all opportunities to test apprentices' understanding of all aspects of safeguarding during progress reviews, particularly in how apprentices apply their learning in the workplace and their personal lives.
- Set up and implement the safeguarding electronic tracking system to ensure effective and accurate recording and monitoring of safeguarding referrals.

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