

WDR Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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 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.

WDR Limited is a commercial training organisation that started operating about 45 years ago, delivering mostly leadership and management training. It began to receive public funding for apprenticeships in August 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were a total of 83 apprentices on programmes, with a further eight on breaks in learning. The vast majority of apprentices are over 19 years old and are enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships. Just under half of the current apprentices are on a team-leading level 3 apprenticeship. The remainder of the apprentices are enrolled on apprenticeships in business administration at level 3, data analyst, software developer or associate project manager at level 4 and operational and departmental manager at level 5.

Themes

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

Insufficient

Leaders and managers have not sufficiently implemented the full requirements and principles of an apprenticeship. They do not have effective arrangements in place to monitor and review the progress apprentices are making or understand how they benefit from their training. Leaders and managers do not check that apprentices receive individually planned on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices are not able to link what they are doing in the workplace to their apprenticeship programme. As a result, apprentices fail to make the progress of which they are capable or complete their programmes on time.

Leaders and managers have not made sure that potential apprentices and their line managers fully understand the requirements and components of an apprenticeship. One group of team-leading apprentices were given no choice by their employer about participating on an apprenticeship programme. Subsequently, high numbers of apprentices have left the programme early. Leaders and managers identified this area for improvement and have recently changed their recruitment process to involve fully both apprentices and their line managers. However, this is very recent, and it is too early to judge its impact.

Quality assurance arrangements are ineffective. Leaders and managers have not taken enough action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Quality improvement planning is not sufficiently evaluative, and, as a result, managers do not deal with the weaknesses. The self-assessment report is insufficiently critical. It does not identify areas of weakness and has not resulted in improvements for apprentices. Action planning is weak and improvements in the quality of provision are too slow. For example, safeguarding training for staff was identified as a weakness in August 2018. However, little action was taken until January 2019.

Leaders and managers do not have a clear overview of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices are developing. They are not aware of the progress different groups of apprentices are making or where off-the-job training is not being delivered. Recently they have introduced new processes to identify slow progress being made by some apprentices. Managers have implemented actions to improve this. However, this is very recent, and it is too early to judge its impact.

Leaders and managers have not implemented formal governance relating to apprenticeships. As a result, they do not receive enough constructive and meaningful challenge to bring about improvements.

Leaders and managers have established good working relationships with employers. Through these partnerships, leaders and managers have developed a well-considered curriculum that meets the needs of employers. Leaders and managers have developed high-quality learning resources to support curriculum development, based upon the experience and expertise of WDR coaches.

Leaders have recently recruited new senior managers to strengthen the management of the apprenticeship provision. They have started to make improvements; however, it is too early to judge their impact.

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

Too many apprentices make slow progress or do not complete their apprenticeship. Leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices receive the support they need to make good progress. Apprentices are not always aware of the progress they are making or what they need to do to complete their full apprenticeship. Of the apprentices that remain on the programme, around one third are making slow progress. In one group of team-leading level 3 apprentices, only four of the 12 who started in June 2018 remain on the programme.

Apprentices and coaches do not identify a starting point to be able to measure apprentices' progress and development effectively. Apprentices do not have individual plans that help them to develop the skills and knowledge that they need and, as a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders, managers and coaches do not ensure that apprentices get their entitlement to off-the-job training. Apprentices do not always get time off from their work to complete their training and development and often do the research needed to complete the workbooks in their own time. Too many apprentices do not attend the off-the-job workshops to get face-to-face training and feedback. Therefore, apprentices do not gain the required knowledge to complete the associated workbook.

Coaches focus too much on apprentices' completion of individual modules and units. They do not measure the progress apprentices are making on their workplace skills and behaviours. Apprentices do not have useful targets to enable them to complete in the planned timescale. Arrangements for end-point assessment are not fully developed. Apprentices are not fully aware of how to prepare for the assessment or what this involves.

Most apprentices' line managers are not sufficiently involved in the apprenticeship programmes. They do not attend the one-to-one coaching meetings to review apprentices' progress or agree apprentices' further development needs at work. As a result, they are not aware of the progress apprentices are making, how to support them or what they still need to do. Coaches do not identify and record apprentices' new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Coaches do not identify and record apprentices overall progress towards completing all elements of their apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices make slow progress and do not receive appropriate support.

Leaders and managers do not emphasise the importance of developing good English and mathematical skills linked to the apprentices' work. The planning and delivery of training to develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills are poor. Coaches do not pay enough attention to the development of English and mathematics skills and knowledge. Therefore, apprentices do not improve their English and mathematical skills for work. Apprentices that need to complete functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics as part of their apprenticeship do not receive enough support or tuition.

Those apprentices that do complete their training develop new knowledge and skills and apply these in their workplace roles. For example, team-leading apprentices develop new knowledge and skills to help them manage conflict in their teams. Data analyst apprentices can create data flow diagrams that they use to make decisions.

In contrast to the face-to-face and on-site training, apprentices benefit from well-designed and informative distance-learning workbooks. From these, apprentices gain good knowledge that is referenced well to the requirements of the apprenticeship standards. Data analyst apprentices produce work of a high standard. Coaches

provide effective developmental feedback to apprentices on their work with these workbooks. This enables apprentices to improve the work they have submitted. For example, one coach identified how an apprentice applied the theory to their answers and suggested further research to deepen their knowledge.

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

Leaders and managers do not comply with their statutory requirements under the 'Prevent' duty. They do not have a risk assessment or action plan that identifies the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism that apprentices may come across. Training for staff on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty is insufficient. Staff have not, until very recently, undertaken any training to understand how to protect apprentices from potential harm.

Coaches do not reinforce safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty or the local risks of radicalisation and extremism to apprentices so they can appreciate the threats they may come across in their everyday lives and at work. A recently introduced workbook to cover safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values has not been completed by apprentices. Therefore, apprentices have a poor understanding of safeguarding. Apprentices have not had training regarding staying safe online. As a result, they are not fully aware of the potential dangers of the internet and social media.

Leaders and managers use safeguarding policies and follow procedures that are appropriate and cover the main priorities in relation to safer recruitment. Detailed and thorough recruitment checks, including reference checks, are carried out on all new staff before joining the organisation. The designated safeguarding leads have undertaken appropriate training to enable them to carry out their role. Coaches are aware of how to report safeguarding incidents; to date there have been none.

Leaders and managers ensure that health and safety checks are carried out effectively on apprentices' workplaces prior to apprentices starting their programme. Apprentices feel safe and work in safe environments.

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