

# Trainingplatform 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 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.

Trainingplatform Ltd was established in 2012 to deliver programmes through subcontracted partnership arrangements. The company became a levy-funded apprenticeship provider in 2017. Trainingplatform Ltd works with five employers and specialises in training for the travel and customer service industries. There are currently 35 levy-funded apprentices on a mix of standards-based apprenticeships and frameworks: 14 on the travel consultant standard at level 3 and 21 on business administration, customer services, team leading and management frameworks across levels 2, 3 and 4.

### Themes

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

**Reasonable progress**

The directors are passionate about the training that they offer. They have a good knowledge of the sectors they work in. As a result, they develop highly-effective employer relationships. Directors ensure that the provision supports employers to recruit, train and employ competent and effective staff in their travel and customer service-related businesses. Directors' strategy for growth is planned effectively and they ensure that they develop the provision solely within their areas of expertise. Directors plan the provision collaboratively with employers to meet their needs and those of the apprentices. For example, they plan off-the-job training carefully to avoid peak work times, providing support remotely to ensure that apprentices continue to make good progress over time.

Directors skilfully recruit highly qualified assessors and tutors who have a wealth of current industry knowledge and experience. As a result, apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours to support them in their job roles.

Directors, tutors and assessors have a good understanding of the requirements of both framework and standards-based apprenticeship programmes. Directors attend product and leadership development sessions frequently that help them to develop relevant programmes to meet employers' needs. They are knowledgeable about end-point assessment (EPA) requirements and have developed supportive processes that help apprentices achieve their EPA.

Directors have a good oversight of apprentices' progress. They put appropriate interventions in place to support apprentices who become at risk of falling behind. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices are on target to achieve their programmes by their planned end date. Directors are aware of the progress that each apprentice makes. They rightly recognise the limitations of the current recording and monitoring system and plan to introduce a new system to track apprentices' progress more clearly. However, the new system was not operational for the monitoring visit.

Employers value the high-quality training that apprentices receive. Most employers release apprentices for off-the-job training sessions. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices develop substantial knowledge, confidence and self-esteem and make a significant contribution to their employers' businesses. Directors have clear and effective processes to plan, deliver and record apprentices' off-the-job training activities.

Quality assurance and quality improvement arrangements require further development. Directors have yet to develop a quality improvement strategy that helps them to identify routinely the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The quality improvement plan does not identify clear targets against which the success of the provision can be measured. Managers' observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not place enough emphasis on the impact that the assessor or tutor has on apprentices' learning and individual progress. Managers' judgements of the quality of teaching and training are often overgenerous. As a result, assessors and tutors do not know specifically what they need to do to improve their teaching and training practices.

Directors have introduced recently new performance management arrangements for staff. These include frequent individual meetings with line managers and annual performance reviews. The process is in its infancy but is beginning to improve and develop staff's skills, teaching practices and accountability. As a result, the quality of the provision is improving.

Governance arrangements are weak. Directors have an appropriately qualified 'critical friend' and an external business adviser who they work with frequently. However, they do not benefit from sufficient external scrutiny that supports or challenges the directors' vision for the company or holds them to account for the quality of the provision.

**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**

The vast majority of apprentices make good progress and achieve their apprenticeship. They enjoy their apprenticeship training. Staff are helpful and supportive. Assessors and tutors visit and make contact with their apprentices frequently and support their training and development effectively.

Apprentices benefit from highly effective on-the-job training. They gain new travel-industry and customer-service knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices become increasingly confident and deal effectively with customers face-to-face and on the telephone, including managing difficult customers. For example, apprentices calculate time differences and the impact on travel arrangements, arrange different forms of coordinated travel, calculate currency exchange, and give information on specific destinations and visa requirements. They learn about, and use, new websites and become knowledgeable about the products and services of specific tour operators.

Apprentices use their off-the-job training well to enhance their skills and behaviours in the workplace. They improve their customer-service skills, gain in confidence, and develop effective team working skills. For example, apprentices, who move from being a team member to a team leader understand the necessary changes in their behaviour to manage the team effectively.

Apprentices achieve their apprenticeships and progress into meaningful and relevant work. In 2017, an apprentice achieved the national 'Apprentice of the Year' award. In 2018, another apprentice reached the finals of the National Apprenticeships' 'Rising Star' awards. Almost all apprentices remain with their employers when they complete their apprenticeship, and a few have gained promotion to assistant managers.

Apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships understand the timing, requirements and importance of the EPA. Assessors and tutors plan effective revision sessions, mock activities and rehearsals with travel specialists to prepare apprentices for their EPA.

Assessors and tutors do not provide sufficiently informative feedback to apprentices. Feedback to apprentices is often overly positive and does not help them to understand clearly what they have done successfully and what they need to do to improve their work further. However, most apprentices make the progress expected of them

Assessors and tutors do not develop apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills sufficiently. Directors, assessors and tutors do not place enough emphasis on preparing apprentices for functional skills examinations. Directors have recently implemented a strategy to improve apprentices' English, mathematical and

digital skills. However, the impact of their actions was not evident during the monitoring visit.

Assessors and tutors do not use their knowledge of apprentices' starting points effectively to plan and deliver individualised training, particularly in off-the-job training sessions. They do not set sufficiently challenging targets or record progress against them adequately to enable apprentices to make even better than expected progress. However, employers recognise that apprentices develop good work-related knowledge, skills and behaviours and become valued members of staff.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Directors have implemented comprehensive arrangements to safeguard apprentices. They use high-quality resources to ensure that apprentices gain a good understanding of safeguarding, for example brochures, handbooks and monthly updates. As a result, apprentices know who they need to contact if they have a concern. Apprentices develop a good understanding of wider safeguarding issues such as online safety and health and safety. However, a few apprentices do not have a sufficient understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Staff care about the health, safety and well-being of their apprentices. They receive regular updates about apprentices' well-being during their visits and telephone discussions. Assessors and tutors explore any safety issues or safeguarding incidents since their previous contact to ensure that apprentices are safe.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is highly qualified in safeguarding. Current and relevant training enables her to carry out her role effectively. She has extensive experience in a variety of educational and business settings and understands fully the requirements of the role. The DSL has been in post since October 2018. She is reviewing currently all safeguarding policies, procedures and training materials to ensure that they remain relevant and effective so that apprentices are kept safe and that staff understand their responsibilities.

Directors undertake appropriate employment checks before they appoint new staff. Staff receive effective safeguarding training during their induction and throughout their employment. Safeguarding and health and safety are discussed with apprentices and staff frequently, which reinforces their understanding and awareness of risks.

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