

# Choice Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Nick Crombie, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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.

Choice Training Limited (Choice) is a small, independent learning provider based in Dagenham, Essex. It was formed in 2012. It began to offer employer levy-funded apprenticeships in May 2017. The range of programmes now includes plumbing, planned and reactive maintenance, and building-services engineering. Choice currently has around 100 apprentices, of whom a third are following standards-based programmes. Just under a quarter of apprentices are following intermediate-level programmes. Three quarters of apprentices are above 19 years of age. Four apprentices are women, all of them following advanced-level programmes. Choice employs no sub-contractors. Choice delivers subcontracted apprenticeship provision on behalf of other providers. This provision was not in scope for inspection.

### Themes

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders, managers and tutors have extensive theoretical knowledge and practical experience of the heating, ventilation, maintenance, and building-services sectors. They use their knowledge and skills very effectively to plan all apprenticeship programmes. They are strongly committed to ensuring that apprentices become competent in their chosen trades.

Tutors and assessors are well qualified in their vocational sectors. Almost all have completed or are working towards a teaching qualification.

All apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job-training and benefit greatly from it. They attend Choice's training centre in Dagenham one full day each week, where they receive extensive theory and practical training. Apprentices' attendance at the centre is high.

Leaders and managers have equipped the Dagenham training centre with the many different technologies, from basic to advanced, that apprentices will install and

maintain routinely in the course of their jobs. Apprentices are very complimentary about the high standard and relevance of the training and support they receive at the centre. As a result, they develop substantial new vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders and managers maintain close and productive working relationships with employers. As a result, they develop carefully tailored programmes which meet employers' and apprentices' specific needs. Employers recognise and value their apprentices' increasing effectiveness in the workplace.

Leaders and training staff maintain regular communication between apprentices' senior and line managers. This builds employers' understanding of the apprenticeship programmes and the progress their apprentices make. Training staff liaise closely with employers to ensure that apprentices have good opportunities to learn the knowledge, skills and behaviours they require as part of their programme. Staff conduct regular reviews with apprentices and employers, which provide them with useful feedback on apprentices' performance and progress.

Leaders and managers play a key role in ensuring that apprentices are placed on the right programme that will develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Leaders focus strongly on encouraging women to become apprentices in this sector, with modest success.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. Their evaluation of the apprenticeship programme is thorough and evaluative. Leaders identify and plan actions to achieve quality improvement on an ongoing basis. However, these action plans are often too broad and do not identify what needs to be done in order to achieve an objective.

Leaders and managers have not yet implemented some of their priority actions to improve. These include procedures to use apprentices' starting points in English, mathematics and information technology skills better to plan learning.

Leaders and managers have no formal governance arrangements in place. They acknowledge correctly that there is a lack of effective external support and challenge.

**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**

Apprentices' self-confidence, technical knowledge and behaviours develop substantially as they progress through their apprenticeship. They gain valuable new knowledge, skills and behaviours such as fault finding and fixing. Their understanding of the link between theory and practice is good. This helps them to be more effective at identifying and solving problems. Tutors and assessors provide

them with good advice and guidance on career options. Apprentices have a good understanding of the various career paths open to them.

Tutors and assessors have developed effective systems to monitor the progress apprentices make towards completing their programme. Staff intervene quickly and effectively to support any apprentices who show signs of falling behind with their studies.

Apprentices improve their English, mathematics and, where relevant, information and communication technology knowledge and skills as part of their apprenticeship programmes. A high proportion of apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications as an integral part of their training. On completing their English qualifications, they are able to produce emails and reports that are clear and unambiguous.

Tutors and assessors use probing questions effectively in lessons to encourage apprentices to think through problems and work out correct solutions for themselves. Consequently, apprentices remember their learning and implement the knowledge, skills and behaviours valued by employers. Assessors assess rigorously the quality of apprentices' practical work at the training centre and at work.

Tutors and assessors ensure that apprentices on standards-based programmes develop the fundamental knowledge and skills expected by employers. Most apprentices make at least the expected progress towards completing their programme by the planned end date.

Leaders evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly. Their findings lead to professional development which improves tutors', assessors' and reviewers' professional practice.

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

Most apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding and who to contact if they have concerns. Apprentices are clear about how to report any worries about other apprentices' behaviour, for example bullying. They have a good knowledge of the 'Prevent' duty, British values, and equality and diversity. Most apprentices' understanding of these various aspects is developed progressively from induction and through useful discussions during off-the-job-training and reviews.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They have a detailed understanding of good health and safety practices. They follow these closely at work and during their off-the-job-training. They know how to stay safe online.

The designated safeguarding lead and all staff receive appropriate training. Leaders and managers ensure that staff they recruit are safe to work with their apprentices. A comprehensive 'Prevent' risk assessment is in place.

Choice staff care passionately about apprentices' well-being. Apprentices have benefited from recent informative presentations by external speakers on topics such as maintaining their mental health. Managers are increasingly being approached by apprentices seeking advice on sensitive personal issues. However, managers have not yet received any formal training in how best to respond to these approaches, particularly mental health.

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