

# Workpays Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1270891

**Name of lead inspector:** Nigel Bragg, HMI

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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.

Workpays Limited (Workpays) was established in 2010 and is an independent learning provider. It began delivering vocational training by means of levy-funded apprenticeships in May 2017. Workpays has 67 standards-based and three framework-based apprentices. They are working towards a range of apprenticeships, including team leader, business administration and management. Programmes are offered at levels 2, 3 and 5. Apprentices are employed at sites across England. They undertake all their training at the workplace.

At the time of this inspection visit, 119 adult learners were studying vocational and employability programmes. These were delivered at sites in Leicester, Chesterfield, Derby and Batley. Both the apprenticeship and adult learning provision were in scope for the monitoring visit.

### Themes

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

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers share an ambitious vision to offer high-quality apprenticeship training. This has been appropriately aligned and provides pertinent opportunities for further and higher study. The training addresses well many of the industry skills development needs evident in the geographical locations served.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship programmes. They carefully recruit individuals to the apprenticeships. Consequently, few apprentices leave the programme before completing it. Leaders take particular care to only contract with employers who have the capacity and commitment to deliver apprenticeship training.

Managers work closely with employers to provide training that meets business needs. For example, they have carefully planned training and assessment to fit with the

data protection requirements of the finance sector. Senior leaders have implemented a successful strategy to help apprentices whose training has stopped due to a provider ceasing business. Tutors have effectively reintroduced apprentices to their studies through individual and group sessions. This has resulted in motivated apprentices who are on track to achieve their learning goals.

Leaders and managers are very active in promoting the benefits of apprenticeship training. For example, they visit a substantial number of schools within the East and West Midlands to promote teachers', parents' and students' awareness of apprenticeships. They make good use of 'apprenticeship ambassadors' to enhance prospective learners' understanding of how training can help them fulfil their career aspirations.

Training, assessing and coaching staff have a fitting level of expertise and knowledge to undertake their roles. They participate in an adequate range of professional training, including activities to develop their teaching practice. All learning takes place in good-quality accommodation. Teaching staff have suitable access to, and make appropriate use of, information technology to support learning.

Quality improvement and assurance arrangements are effective in raising standards of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders and managers know their provision well. They have established a self-critical culture that encourages open debate within the organisation. This is reflected in the self-assessment process which is inclusive of others views and reflects the judgements made by inspectors. Managers make effective use of the quality improvement action plan to raise the provision's standards. However, because of key staff changes, the pace of improvement has not always been rapid enough. Senior leaders recognise this. They are successfully accelerating the rate of improvement in the few affected areas.

Managers make regular use of direct observation of training to assess its quality. Outcomes of this process are recorded in detail. However, the recorded evaluations place an over-reliance on evaluating tutors' performance rather than the quality of learning. This curtails the effective identification of actions to address weaker practice so that standards improve swiftly.

**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 develop a wide range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours that are specific to their occupations. For example, they acquire the skills required to process and monitor employees' expense claims. Management apprentices develop their knowledge of the theoretical models that underpin modern management practices such as project management.

Managers and staff ensure that apprentices receive an appropriate programme of on- and off-the-job training. To facilitate programme planning, all apprentices complete a detailed skills gap analysis at the start of their programmes. Tutors make effective use of this to develop apprentices' personalised professional development plans that meet programme requirements.

Training sessions are thoroughly planned. Tutors cover topics in a clear and precise manner. Training includes 'master classes' in which apprentices effectively develop their theoretical knowledge. Apprentices also benefit from one-to-one sessions with tutors, who successfully help them catch up if they are struggling with their studies. Individual coaching provides apprentices with the opportunity to discuss how topics and concepts covered in classroom sessions can be applied to their daily work. For example, team leader apprentices can articulate how different communication and delegation skills are useful when managing group and individual workloads. Most apprentices make good use of independent study activities to develop rapidly their skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Training and coaching staff have appropriate expertise that they use effectively to support apprentices. They provide good-quality training and coaching sessions that help apprentices apply their new knowledge to their own work situations. Consequently, they become more effective and productive employees. For example, management apprentices can manipulate and interrogate bespoke information technology systems to produce business reports.

Apprentices are familiar with the requirements of end-point assessments and at what standard they are currently working. As a result of tutors' and trainers' good preparation, most apprentices understand clearly what is required for each element of these assessments. However, management apprentices at level 5 do not always have a good enough appreciation of the grading criteria. This hinders their ability to prepare themselves for assessment and achieve higher grades.

Staff appropriately monitor apprentices' progress. They record the completion of study and work tasks and the amount and type of training apprentices have completed. Generally, apprentices are making expected or better progress from their starting points. However, a few of the small number of management apprentices at level 5 are not achieving at the rate of which they are capable. In some cases, the quality of their written work indicates only a weak grasp of topics.

Workplace managers are not always effectively involved in apprentices' progress reviews. Consequently, they miss opportunities to plan on-the-job training and work activities for apprentices that supports their development. This slows the progress of a minority of apprentices.

Tutors and coaches and assessors do not develop all apprentices' English and mathematic skills to a sufficiently high standard. Too often, tutors and coaches fail to use information on apprentices' skills development needs fully to aid improvement. For most apprentices, this does not affect their ability to complete their

apprenticeship as they already hold appropriate qualifications in these subjects. In a small number of cases, the quality of apprentices' written work is poor and is not improving fast enough. Most apprentices develop useful digital skills at a good rate.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress**

The senior leadership team has implemented a clear strategy to provide adult learning programmes that allow adults to re-engage with learning. The team works closely with local enterprise councils, Jobcentre Plus and recruitment agencies to identify training skills shortages. This ensures that the adult programmes continue to evolve and provide relevant training programmes for the changing local priorities. For example, Workpays offers training to address Derbyshire County Council's local skills shortage in the health and social care sector. Similarly, construction programmes are now provided as a response to Leicestershire County Council's recognition of vocational skills training needs. As a result of this effective collaboration, learners are better prepared to progress to further education or apply for employment.

Most learners are those who have not been in employment for a significant period of time. In response, leaders and managers have developed and implemented an effective pre-screen interview programme. This practical support assists learners to gain employment, for example by helping them understand how to research prospective employers as preparation for job interviews. In addition, managers have introduced occupational specific programmes that give learners a guaranteed job interview with employers. Consequently, learners can practise using their new skills and knowledge in a meaningful context.

Achievement rates for learners are high. The very large majority of learners who commence a programme complete it. Leaders and managers carefully track the progression of all learners. Following programme completion, around two thirds of learners remain in learning. Learners enter sustained and paid employment at an appropriately high rate.

Learners receive suitable assessment of their English and mathematics skills development needs before they begin their programme. Tutors and assessors effectively use these evaluations to identify where learners require extra support to succeed. When needed, learners are encouraged to participate in the available extra English and mathematics tuition. Most learners make the expected progress in improving their English and mathematical skills.

Tutors and assessors effectively mark learners' work on a weekly basis. Learners value the feedback they receive. It typically includes appropriately helpful feedback. Hence, learners know what actions they need to undertake to achieve to a higher standard. This facilitates learners' pride in developing their often neat and well-

presented written work. Learners take responsibility for completing a workbook which many use effectively for reference and to reflect on their progress.

Learners develop a good appreciation of the importance employers place on attendance and punctuality. Learners arrive early for taught sessions and are ready to start on time. Tutors and assessors have worked hard to create a relaxed and informal working relationship in all classes. This helps build learners' confidence and means that the most reluctant learners engage more easily in class discussions. For example, learners were able to share their experiences of probationary periods in new jobs and what a notice period means.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and managers use relevant safeguarding processes to keep all learners and staff safe. They successfully query the effectiveness of safeguarding practices to inform management actions leading to improvement.

The knowledgeable designated safeguarding officer (DSO) has a sound awareness of the role's responsibilities. Staff receive pertinent training to improve their competence in ensuring adult learners' and apprentices' welfare. Training includes consideration of significant regional safeguarding concerns, such as child sexual exploitation and mental wellbeing. However, leaders acknowledge that they do not have enough intelligence on the emerging safeguarding problems within all the geographical areas they serve.

Adult learners and apprentices know how to raise a concern. The DSO uses a good range and variety of external agency links to support all learners who need specialist help. Managers keep detailed records of safeguarding incidents. They are subject to suitable monitoring and are resolved rapidly. Managers use comprehensive recruitment procedures to ensure that staff are subject to appropriate checks prior to commencing their duties. Consequently, all learners report feeling safe at their workplace or training venue.

Adult learners have an adequate or better understanding of fundamental British values and how to protect themselves from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. However, not all apprentices have developed a good enough appreciation of how to apply their learning within the workplace. All learners demonstrate an adequate understanding of the safe use of social media and the internet.

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