

# South West Skills Academy Limited

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 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.

South West Skills Academy Limited (SWSA) started delivering apprenticeships in August 2017. Prior to this, SWSA delivered diplomas as a subcontractor for a local college. It continues to deliver adult provision as part of this subcontract. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 39 levy-funded apprentices enrolled on apprenticeship standards. All apprentices are employees of SWSA's parent company, Penhellis Community Care, and are working towards adult care worker qualifications at level 2 or level 3.

### 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 have ensured that all of the necessary components of a successful apprenticeship programme are in place. Apprentices receive good on- and off-the-job training. They learn relevant new skills and knowledge and develop their English and mathematical skills. Consequently, they are more effective care workers.

The carefully designed programme teaches apprentices to understand and react appropriately to their clients' changing needs. Apprentices improve the quality of care for their clients by applying their new knowledge and skills. For example, apprentices assisting clients who develop hearing loss or diabetes undertake specialist clinical training, so that they can provide better care for them. Many apprentices gain higher responsibilities or promotion at work as a result of their apprenticeship, for example securing roles such as key health workers.

Most apprentices are existing employees with previous experience as care workers. Employer and SWSA staff work well to ensure that the vast majority of apprentices develop new skills, such as treating people with dignity when assisting with their individual needs. Managers meet regularly with the employer's staff to share apprentices' progress and plan off-the-job training effectively. As a result, apprentices improve their professional practice and enhance their career potential.

However, some staff do not record off-the-job training well enough and records are not always accurate for all apprentices. Therefore, at times, managers are not entirely confident that all apprentices are receiving the highest-quality, personalised training they may need.

Apprentices value the relationship they establish with managers highly and are motivated to succeed. Managers monitor apprentices' progress very effectively and intervene appropriately to help apprentices who are falling behind. They take a personal interest in all aspects of apprentices' progress, including their pastoral care. As a result, all apprentices make the progress they should.

A supportive and positive training ethos supports apprentices' learning well. Leaders and managers provide relevant and useful continuing professional development (CPD) for staff, for example level 3 teaching awards, level 2 advice and guidance, and health and safety and safeguarding training. Staff benefit from these development opportunities and gain relevant skills that they apply in their roles. They enjoy working for SWSA.

Although managers directly involved in the apprenticeship programme understand the requirements of apprenticeships, senior leaders are less knowledgeable. Managers monitor the progress of apprentices very well. However, their reports to senior leaders on apprentices' progress and achievements are not effective enough in identifying areas of concern. Therefore, the self-assessment process does not allow the organisation to set relevant performance monitoring targets for improvements. Leaders and managers have plans which show the potential to strengthen the governance arrangements further.

**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 can identify new useful knowledge and skills that they apply in their workplace. For example, learning about the side effects of medication has improved apprentices' confidence in supporting clients and their families. Apprentices develop a deeper understanding of the different types of pain and discomfort and the impact this can have on clients' well-being and personality.

Assessors are experienced care workers with relevant teaching qualifications. They conduct accurate assessments of apprentices' workplace skills, although these are not always planned well enough in advance to enable apprentices to prepare fully. Assessors regularly review and record their apprentices' progress towards gaining their diploma, and apprentices are encouraged reflect on their own progress. However, there is too little emphasis on recording apprentices' progress in developing practical skills and behaviours.

Apprentices enjoy their learning. They attend useful study days and specialist training courses where they develop new skills and keep up to date with changes in the care sector. For example, apprentices learn from specialists about stoma and catheter care of clients, measuring blood sugars in clients who are diabetic and about the Mental Capacity Act.

Most apprentices have a good understanding of the requirements of end-point assessment because staff have informed them appropriately. Almost all of the apprentices who have attempted end-point assessments to date have passed. However, assessors do not set targets early enough for apprentices who are capable at achieving the highest grades, and some apprentices are not aware of the different grades available to them until after they have completed their portfolios.

All apprentices take an assessment of their English and mathematics skills at the beginning of their programme. Managers use results effectively to plan apprentices' functional skills training. Specialist mathematics and English tutors and assessors support apprentices through workshops and individual training. All apprentices take level 2 tests in English and mathematics and gain their functional skills qualifications before they reach end-point assessment.

All apprentices are making good progress. The few who have now completed their apprenticeship did so in the time they were allocated. Most apprentices remain with their employer once they have completed their qualification and a high proportion gain promotion or progress to a higher level. Managers encourage apprentices to research wider career options within the care sector and support their progression through additional training and CPD.

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

A strong culture of safeguarding ensures that appropriate safeguarding procedures and policies are in place. Leaders and staff are clear about their responsibilities and those of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy. Managers and staff are appropriately trained and complete regular, appropriate safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty updates to ensure that their knowledge is up to date. Managers know how to make safeguarding referrals to relevant external partners if required.

Managers have produced a useful 'Prevent' duty action plan which mitigates appropriately against any potential risks, including reference to local extremism. However, it is not sufficiently clear on how any specific groups may pose a threat to apprentices in care work generally or in their workplaces.

Staff use appropriate resources to develop apprentices' knowledge and understanding of the 'Prevent' duty, British values and safeguarding, and they regularly share ways of improving this further. They provide apprentices with details

of useful external organisations that offer support if needed, for example Victim Support, Alcoholics Anonymous and the National Debtline.

Apprentices feel safe and well supported by SWSA staff and managers. They know who to contact if they have any concerns. The large majority know how the potential risk of radicalisation affects them and have a good understanding of British values.

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