

Gloucestershire Enterprise Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Christine Lacey, Ofsted Inspector

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Address: Unit 3
Twigworth Court
Tewkesbury Road
Twigworth
Gloucester
GL2 9PG



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.

In 2016, Gloucestershire Enterprise Limited (GEL) took part in a pilot scheme to raise the numbers engaged in higher-level apprenticeships, which led to application and approval to be on the register of apprenticeship training providers in December 2017. The first apprentices were recruited in February 2018. GEL currently has 176 levy-funded apprentices, all on standards. Of these, 83 were completing the level 3 team leader/supervisor, 26 were completing the level 4 associate project manager and 67 were completing the level 5 operations/departmental manager.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers do not effectively plan and monitor how well an apprentices' training, including their development of English and mathematics, meets the requirements for an apprenticeship. Systems to track and monitor apprentices' progress and to identify and support apprentices who have fallen behind with their studies have been implemented too slowly. Consequently, leaders are unaware that too many apprentices are not on track to complete their apprenticeship within the expected time. Strategies to intervene quickly and support apprentices to complete their qualification are underdeveloped.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all employers understand and apply the requirements for all apprentices to receive adequate time off the job to complete their apprenticeship in a timely manner. Employers benefit from the skills and knowledge gained by apprentices; however, only a minority have set aside sufficient time for apprentices to complete their studies.

Leaders, trainers, assessors and apprentices have a good understanding of the requirements of the final assessment. Trainers and assessors use a wide range of resources, including online materials and one-to-one coaching sessions, to explain the process to the apprentices. Consequently, apprentices feel well prepared to review their learning and are clear about the expectations of their final assessment.

Senior leaders' self-assessment of the provision, together with an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, identify many of the areas for improvement. However, the approach does not support managers to implement actions swiftly and make rapid improvements. Not enough staff or the board of directors have sufficient opportunities to support, or to challenge, the action plan.

The board of non-executive directors supports senior leaders with its collective business experience. Board members are clear about their role in challenging leaders and managers and holding them to account and, in those areas that they have information on, they do this successfully. However, they are not involved in the self-assessment process, and this limits the effectiveness of the challenge they are able to offer.

Leaders effectively train employers to provide apprentices with mentoring support throughout their apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices are well supported in the workplace by supervisors or mentors who have a good understanding of how to coach them. However, too many apprentices are not given sufficient time off the job and make slow progress.

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

Trainers and assessors do not have a clear understanding of apprentices' progress. Apprentices routinely receive progress reviews. However, the large majority of these reviews are not sufficiently focused on how apprentices can develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours and apply them in their workplace or improve their future performance. These reviews are not used to set stretching, personalised targets to address weaknesses.

Trainers' and assessors' feedback to apprentices is too often brief and not specific enough to help them know how to improve their work further. Feedback from employers is not used sufficiently. As a result, too few apprentices make rapid progress or know what they need to do to improve the standard of their work and complete their apprenticeship on time.

Leaders, trainers and assessors have low expectations for apprentices' attendance at training sessions. Trainers and assessors do not challenge poor attendance or appropriately address this issue at progress reviews. As a result, too many apprentices are not gaining the appropriate knowledge and skills and are making slow progress.

Trainers and assessors do not effectively support apprentices to improve their English, mathematical and digital skills. Apprentices who require English and

mathematics qualifications do not always receive timely support which will allow them to achieve the required level in these subjects and complete their apprenticeship on time. Apprentices do not receive sufficient support to further develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need in their job roles or prepare them for the next stages of their career. Leaders have identified this as an area for improvement and have started to address these weaknesses.

Trainers are very well qualified and experienced in their vocational areas. Apprentices benefit from their trainers' extensive industrial knowledge which they relate well to real-life experience. They support those apprentices who attend well to develop the knowledge and practical skills expected by their apprenticeship standard. A small minority of apprentices have gained promotion since starting their apprenticeship and most have a clear and well-thought-out progression plan.

Leaders and managers provide apprentices with good vocational training that supports them in developing new knowledge and skills relevant to their job role. Apprentices are highly motivated, value the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills and are keen to learn. They express their knowledge well, using industry terms and phrases accurately and in the context of their work. For example, level 3 supervisory apprentices develop the skills and confidence necessary to manage people effectively and to deal with challenging situations.

Leaders and managers have developed a curriculum which includes industry-recognised qualifications within their apprenticeship programme to support apprentices to acquire new skills which they are able to apply in the workplace and gain promotion. For example, level 3 and level 5 apprentices undertake a coaching qualification which supports them to develop the skills they require to be more effective in their job roles when dealing with people.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Designated safeguarding leads receive appropriate training and demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibilities and safeguarding knowledge, such as cyber security.

Leaders and managers have ensured that appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and documentation are in place and that these are reviewed regularly. All staff complete training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders ensure that safe recruitment procedures are in place and that staff are recruited with integrity. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the importance of safeguarding apprentices. All staff are risk assessed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and these are updated every three years.

Leaders have established effective links with Gloucestershire safeguarding board, the local enterprise partnership, the police and a range of other agencies in Gloucestershire. Leaders and managers know what to do should there be a safeguarding incident with one of their apprentices.

Apprentices feel safe in the workplace and within the training centre. They have a good understanding of health and safety in their specific work environment. For example, apprentices in an engineering setting are fully conversant with how to deal with hazardous materials and apprentices who are in education settings are very knowledgeable on keeping young people safe.

During induction, apprentices gain appropriate knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism, but these are not yet sufficiently reinforced throughout the apprenticeship. Apprentices gain a comprehensive understanding of mental health issues and are able to apply this knowledge to their supervisory roles.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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