

# The Chief Constable of Thames Valley

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Fadia Clarke Ofsted Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Employer

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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.

The Chief Constable of Thames Valley, otherwise known as Thames Valley Police, registered as an employer provider of apprenticeships in January 2017. At the time of this monitoring visit, it offered training for 156 of its employees using the emergency service contact handler advanced apprenticeship standard, and another seven employees using the learning and development advanced apprenticeship framework.

Thames Valley Police acted as a subcontractor to a further education provider for the delivery of customer service framework apprenticeships between 2011 and 2017. Since 2017, it has become the training provider because of the specialist nature of the occupations it needs to deliver.

### 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 strong governance arrangements in place. The governors influence the provider's training strategy successfully to ensure that it links to the wider police education qualification framework and apprenticeship strategy. The governors' focus is on increasing the professionalism of the workforce through apprenticeship training. As a result, Thames Valley Police recognises its apprentices as skilled employees who have the potential of moving on to wider pathways within the workforce.

Managers ensure that the training programmes they offer meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standards and frameworks in emergency service contact handler and in learning and development. Apprentices receive appropriate time for on- and off-the-job training to complete their studies. However, apprentices do not always record all their training activities. On a very few occasions, this hinders the evaluation of the impact of training on their knowledge and skills development.

Managers check apprentices' progress closely against their starting points and support them when they fall behind. However, they do not link apprentices' personal development plans, reviews, reflection logs and feedback from training staff effectively. As a result, training staff do not always understand apprentices' specific areas of development in order to enable them to progress as swiftly as they should.

Managers select their best practitioners to be trainers, tutors and assessors. These practitioners are occupationally competent and very experienced in their field of practice. This ensures that apprentices have access to highly skilled staff and receive support from competent subject specialists.

Trainers are highly qualified in their field of practice. They undertake professional development to keep their skills up to date. However, managers do not link the professional development of training staff to the feedback from observations and performance management to enhance their delivery skills.

Managers are right to recognise the need to improve the English and mathematical skills of their training staff. They identify staff competency levels through professional development training sessions. However, managers do not link the development needs of training staff to their professional development targets and, as a result, very few trainers are always ensuring that apprentices develop their skills in English and mathematics.

**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 develop new, substantial and occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours to benefit their employers' businesses. They are active and valued members of their teams. For example, apprentices work as frontline contact handlers from an early stage of their apprenticeships and receive support from fully qualified team members.

Apprentices are well matched to their job roles. Staff use initial advice and guidance to identify apprentices' prior skills and qualifications. As a result, a high number of apprentices stay in their high-pressured roles as contact handlers.

Apprentices undertake detailed initial assessments to identify their developmental areas in English and mathematics. However, training staff do not systematically review all of these areas because they lack confidence in tackling a few of the identified developmental areas.

Apprentices benefit from high-quality on- and off-the-job training that supports their development of new and highly relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices receive intensive off-the-job training, supplemented by one-to-one

support, in a live working environment. Consequently, apprentices develop the skills of active listening and high-level communication.

Training staff have comprehensive knowledge and experience. They work in newly developed hubs and align their shift patterns with apprentices in order to enhance peer support. As a result, they support apprentices to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, apprentices deal with calls regarding crimes in progress, under full supervision and with personalised support.

Apprentices receive adequate preparation for their end-point assessments. Apprentices have yet to undertake these. However, those nearing the end of the programme are aware of the requirements and criteria.

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

Leaders and managers have effective safeguarding arrangements. The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy have received appropriate training to implement their safeguarding duties and to develop effective safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policies, such as safe recruitment policy.

Training staff have a strong focus on mental health. They keep comprehensive records to identify patterns of concern. They provide frequent reminders that support is available when training includes traumatic incidents, such as domestic violence.

Apprentices feel safe. Training staff introduce apprentices to safeguarding arrangements at induction. They promote British values and online safety effectively. Apprentices access useful information on the learning management system. They know where to find the designated safeguarding contact and a range of support services. These include an employee assistance programme and mental health support services.

Managers and tutors ensure that apprentices have a basic awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They achieve this during apprentices' induction training but do not develop apprentices' awareness during their programmes.

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