

The Home Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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 Home Group Limited (Home Group) is a large national housing association. It is one of the largest providers of new homes and houses for affordable rent in the country, providing long-term integrated housing, health and social care to vulnerable young people and adults. As a levy-paying employer, it contracts with nine external apprenticeship providers. At the time of the monitoring visit, Home Group was training 70 apprentices through its own apprenticeship training division, Tyneside Foyer, to meet a variety of service needs in adult social care, housing, business administration, customer service, management, hospitality and contact centre operations. Forty-two of the apprentices were Home Group customers; these were vulnerable young people and adults in Home Group accommodation or receiving Home Group care and support. Four apprentices were new employees from outside the organisation. Twenty-four apprentices were employees who were improving their skills or moving into new job roles. Fifty-one apprentices were working to apprenticeship standards at levels 2 and 3. Ten apprentices were on frameworks at levels 2 and 3. Nine managers were level 5 care leadership and management apprentices.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders do not take enough responsibility to ensure that their service managers comply with the requirements for apprenticeships. They do not monitor closely enough the time that apprentices spend in training away from the workplace.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices with integrity. The company's employment services team works closely with service managers across Home Group to give apprentices the careers advice and guidance necessary to begin work in the right roles. However, managers do not do enough with the information that they receive about apprentices' prior knowledge, skills and experience to adjust the duration and content of the apprenticeship when it is appropriate to do so.

Leaders and managers have identified key areas of business support throughout Home Group that can offer job roles to vulnerable adults and young people. Consequently, they provide apprenticeships in areas that support their residents and service users to live independently and securely. They fund the salaries paid to apprentices from a central fund so that apprentices without prior work experience can work as additional members of staff and gain valuable personal resilience and work skills.

Leaders and managers see apprenticeships as vital to the stability and long-term growth of Home Group. Around three quarters of apprentices are Home Group customers. Many have had chaotic and unstable home lives and histories that mean they find it difficult to gain employment or accommodation elsewhere. Home Group provides them with housing and access to the training and support that they need to help them begin work as Home Group employees.

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

Leaders, managers, assessors and workplace mentors work well with apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to become successful and effective employees. Apprentices develop as confident and resilient workers, showing, for example, that they can work independently and without supervision to keep residences safe and well maintained.

Apprentices benefit from high-quality, mandatory off-the-job training that complements the knowledge and skills that they gain from their training in the workplace. They also benefit from gaining a comprehensive understanding of the work that Home Group does as a socially responsible housing association. Apprentices develop an appetite for learning, develop new skills quickly, and take on additional training in, for example, proof reading and using databases. Apprentices who begin work in one service area, such as customer support or contact centre operations, can move into other areas, such as adult social care.

Apprentices who complete their programmes benefit from a job guarantee and often progress into higher level training. Most apprentices progress from a level 2 apprenticeship to a permanent job, further training or a level 3 apprenticeship. Almost all level 3 apprentices who have completed their programme gained a permanent role during their training.

Assessors and workplace mentors are knowledgeable and supportive. Apprentices value the support that they receive. They appreciate the well-directed care and understanding that their colleagues show when they need support to improve and maintain emotional health and well-being. The large proportion of apprentices who

complete and go on to get a job with Home Group enjoy working for the company and strive to do their best because Home Group has invested in their development and financial security.

Despite this effective support, a small number of apprentices do not complete their apprenticeships because they find the transition to employment too challenging. They get the help they need to find appropriate follow-on training.

Through monthly reviews of the progress that apprentices make, managers and assessors identify when apprentices are at risk of falling behind and provide additional support to help apprentices complete their work on time. Leaders and managers know how well individual apprentices are doing but cannot easily judge where there are inconsistencies in the quality of training, which results in a small number of apprentices not doing as well as they could.

Managers are aware that assessors do not give apprentices working to an apprenticeship standard the feedback and direction that they need to prepare for the higher levels of attainment in end-point assessments. Leaders have plans to improve assessors' understanding of the requirements of apprenticeship standards.

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

Effective safeguarding is central to the work that Home Group does with its apprentices.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices and other employees go through the required pre-employment checks. They have put appropriate and proportionate safeguarding policies in place. Through well-structured induction and mandatory training, apprentices understand the complex and challenging backgrounds of their customers and how to make sure that they and their customers are safe.

Apprentices have a well-developed understanding of safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They appreciate the risks associated with working online and are knowledgeable about grooming, substance misuse and gang membership. They apply their knowledge well by, for example, handling sensitive information about customers carefully and respectfully. As a result of their training, apprentices recognise and can act appropriately when there is a perceived risk.

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