

Freshfield Training Associates Ltd

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.

Freshfield Training Associates Limited is an independent training provider based in Mansfield. It began delivering apprenticeships for levy-funded programmes in December 2018. At the time of the monitoring visit, 25 apprentices were on a level 3 apprenticeship in team leader/team supervisor programme. Seven were studying business administration at level 2 and 3 and six were on a level 2 apprenticeship in customer service. Four apprentices were on a level 2 warehousing programme. Most were on a standards-based apprenticeship and all were over 19.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders and managers ensure that apprenticeships are planned effectively and meet the requirements and principles of an apprenticeship. They ensure that employers understand and comply fully with the on- and off-the-job training requirements of an apprenticeship. This training includes useful classroom sessions, online learning and work-related projects.

Leaders and managers develop productive working relationships with employers. Managers check that employers can provide good-quality on-the-job training and experience for apprentices to enable them to achieve the relevant apprenticeship framework or standard. They also check carefully that employers are committed to allowing apprentices time away from the job for off-the-job training.

Apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to work in business administration, customer service and as team leaders. Managers monitor systematically apprentices' off-the-job entitlement and take swift and effective action to rectify any shortfall.

Managers recruit apprentices with integrity. They match apprenticeships with employers' needs and job roles effectively. Assessors liaise with employers to ensure that apprentices gain the required work-related knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Managers ensure that tutors and assessors have the specialisms that they require to support apprentices to make good progress. Tutors and assessors are appropriately qualified. They use their experience and expertise effectively to support apprentices to progress and achieve.

Leaders' and managers' process for recruiting apprentices is thorough. Apprentices receive relevant information about the apprenticeship during induction that includes what they will learn and the importance of end-point assessment. Consequently, most apprentices stay on the programme and complete it within the planned period.

Managers use quality assurance processes effectively to improve tutors' skills and to monitor apprentices' progress. For example, the operations manager meets regularly with tutors and with each employer to evaluate apprentices' progress. Any apprentice falling behind receives effective tailored support to help them catch up with their peers.

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 participate in a range of planned off-the-job training activities that helps them to develop and apply new knowledge, skills and behaviours in their job role. For example, team leaders develop their understanding of different management and communication styles, which helps them to improve their team's effectiveness.

Apprentices produce work of an appropriate standard. In a few cases, they produce work that exceeds the requirements of their programmes. Tutors mark work promptly and provide helpful feedback, though it is occasionally too positive, which limits its usefulness.

Suitably qualified and experienced tutors provide effective off-the-job training. Apprentices benefit from group lessons, one-to-one coaching and individual coaching using prepared workbooks. Apprentices complete much of their study independently and employers provide them with time at work to complete their tasks. However, a few choose to do this work in their own time.

Tutors make good use of the available information to recruit apprentices to a suitable apprenticeship programme at a level that matches their previous qualifications and attainment. As a result, apprentices make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.

Apprentices who need to gain qualifications in English and mathematics are identified at the start of programmes and provided with online learning resources and past papers on which to practice. Apprentices rightly speak highly of the help that tutors provide in these subjects.

Most apprentices are still some way from their end-point assessments. However, they understand what these assessments entail, including the opportunities they afford to gain merit and distinction grades.

Tutors review apprentices' progress each month to discuss the knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices have gained. Tutors share the outcomes of reviews with apprentices' managers. However, a few managers do not participate in these reviews. This reduces the ability of tutors and managers to exploit fully opportunities to coordinate on- and off-the-job training more effectively.

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

Freshfields's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has received suitable training in how to keep apprentices safe. The DSL implements the company's policies and procedures effectively and ensures that these are regularly updated to reflect changes in safeguarding practices.

The company's managers ensure that new staff are safe to work with their apprentices. All staff are subject to pre-employment checks prior to starting work. Managers provide mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training and as a result staff know how to make a referral to the DSL if they have any concerns about apprentices.

Apprentices know how and to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns. They have a basic knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Tutors extend and reinforce apprentices' knowledge and understanding of these topics during reviews. However, few apprentices can recall what they have learned.

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