

Lomax Training Services Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 57907

Name of lead inspector: Andrea Shepherd, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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.

Lomax Training Services Limited is an independent learning provider that delivers specialist training for the energy industry. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 27 apprentices on directly funded and levy-funded programmes. Seven were following the level 3 gas engineer standards-based apprenticeship and 20 were studying on the level 2 gas network team leader standards-based apprenticeship. Lomax Training Services Limited also delivers apprenticeships as a subcontractor to other local providers; this provision was not in scope for this visit.

There have been 191 directly funded adult learner enrolments during 2018/19. At the time of the monitoring visit, almost all the current learners were studying utilities-related qualifications, including smart metering. Around three quarters of adult learners enrolled during the year have been on intensive courses in functional skills English and mathematics.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have an effective strategy for training that meets the needs of the energy industry, an area of high importance locally. Programmes meet local employment demands and skills shortages.

Trainers are well qualified and have extensive industrial experience. They use their knowledge and skills effectively and help apprentices to link vocational knowledge to practical activities. Trainers provide useful examples from industry to help apprentices develop their knowledge of the workplace.

Leaders have invested in well-equipped workshops. Apprentices use industry-standard equipment to develop the skills that they need in the workplace. For

example, they work in a simulated street environment where they develop the skills that they need to respond to reported gas leaks.

Leaders provide training that fully meets the requirements of apprenticeship programmes. They recruit apprentices with integrity and have suitable oversight of apprentices' progress. Managers take appropriate action to reduce the impact on apprentices of unexpected events. For example, they found new employment for a few apprentices who did not receive enough support and commitment from their employer. These apprentices did not benefit from off-the-job training and made insufficient progress. As a result of actions taken by managers, the large majority of these apprentices have re-engaged with their programme and are making appropriate progress towards the completion of their apprenticeship.

Leaders do not make good enough use of the information from the quality reports that they receive from managers. They have recognised this and have recently implemented changes to respond more quickly and provide challenge to staff for improving the quality of the apprentices' experience.

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

Trainers plan and deliver training that coordinates on- and off-the-job training well. This enables apprentices to make good progress. Apprentices are able to carry out more complex tasks in the workplace as a result of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they gain through their training. For example, they gain the skills and licences to use mini-excavators.

Trainers involve employers well in planning the curriculum. Employers understand how they can adapt work patterns to provide apprentices with specific tasks to help them to develop further the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to do their job well. Apprentices recognise that their training helps them to be more effective at work. For example, apprentices with no prior experience accurately complete open cut services on 63-millimetre gas pipes.

Apprentices develop and apply their mathematical skills effectively. Gas engineering apprentices use mathematical formulas confidently. They convert gas flows from cubic feet per minute into cubic metres per minute and they accurately calculate the kilowatt per hour output for gas boilers.

Trainers have successfully adapted training and assessment plans to make sure that, by completing the curriculum, apprentices will meet the standards. However, in a small minority of cases, tutors still track apprentices' progress against the completion of units that were part of the previously taught frameworks. As a result, these apprentices do not have a clear view of their progress.

Apprentices have a good understanding of their end-point assessment. They know the mark that they need for a distinction grade. However, trainers do not consistently provide apprentices with clear guidance about the improvements that they need to make to achieve the higher grade. For a small minority of apprentices, trainers do not provide helpful feedback on their marked work. As a result, these apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve, and often repeat errors.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress

Trainers use their understanding of learners' skills to plan and deliver learning effectively. They successfully encourage learners to work together, which supports the development of learners' knowledge and skills.

Managers have developed successful links with employers. They use these to provide high-quality work placements so that learners benefit from the experience of existing workers. As a result, learners develop new knowledge and skills that prepare them for employment. Many learners secure jobs through their placement. For example, learners studying smart meter courses are linked with employers who send them out with experienced engineers. Learners observe the engineer in practice and go on to complete installations under supervision.

Learners take pride in their work. They are pleased with the quality of work that they produce and take pictures to show their competence. Learners produce work that meets or exceeds the standard for the qualification.

Trainers use their extensive industrial knowledge and expertise to help learners to understand the job role for which they are training. As a result, learners develop their vocational knowledge and skills well. Learners also develop their confidence and self-esteem, which helps them to prepare for gaining employment.

A small minority of trainers do not provide helpful feedback to learners on what they need to do to improve. Feedback from these trainers focuses on the tasks required to complete the topic and does not provide learners with useful guidance on how they can achieve their full potential.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding Reasonable progress

arrangements are in place?

Leaders have taken suitable steps to ensure that learners and apprentices are safe. Managers and trainers provide apprentices with regular and relevant information about how to keep themselves safe, including information about safe driving. Learners and apprentices are aware of the health and safety risks that they should be looking out for. They consistently demonstrate safe working practices in the high-risk environment in which they work.

Leaders recruit staff safely. They make effective use of external links to provide information about emerging risks in the community. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding, including keeping learners and apprentices safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. This is regularly refreshed.

Learners and apprentices understand the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. However, leaders and managers are right to recognise that they need to use the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan to record more accurately local risks and the training that staff complete to help them to identify training needs.

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