

CSA (Services) Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1278692

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

Inspection date(s): 9 to 10 July 2019

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.

CSA (Services) Limited is part of the Credit Services Association, a trade association that represents the debt collection and debt purchase industry. The provider secured a contract for direct delivery to levy-funded apprentices in 2017 and began their first programme in November 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 119 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2, 3 and 4, with an additional three who have recently completed their end-point assessment. Around half of the apprentices were following the level 4 regulatory compliance officer standards-based apprenticeship. The large majority of the level 3 apprentices were following either advanced credit controller/debt collection specialist or compliance/risk officer standards-based apprenticeships. CSA (Services) Limited also delivers the level 2 credit control/collector and level 3 team leading standards-based apprenticeships.

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 a clear vision to provide specialist training to the debt recovery sector. They focus successfully on their role as a trade association. The apprenticeship programmes that they deliver contribute very well to professionalising the debt collection and debt purchase industry.

Leaders are building the capacity of the apprenticeship team successfully. They have recruited highly qualified and experienced tutors from a variety of backgrounds. Managers and tutors use their industry-relevant experience very effectively to plan the curriculum.

Leaders and managers regularly monitor the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. Governors effectively hold managers to account for the progress of apprentices. Managers intervene quickly when apprentices fall behind. As a result, the very large majority of apprentices are on track to achieve their apprenticeship on time.

Leaders recruit apprentices with integrity. They make thorough checks on the suitability of the job role for each apprentice and they ensure that employers are fully aware of their responsibilities. This helps to ensure that apprentices are able to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours through effective on- and off-the-job training.

Leaders and managers make sure that appropriate end-point assessments are in place for all apprentices. However, a small minority of apprentices and employers are not fully prepared for the end-point assessments and do not know exactly what will be expected of them.

Leaders and managers have been too slow to improve teaching on English and mathematic functional skills courses. They have not developed a strategy to increase the level of support for the small minority of apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications.

Leaders do not make enough use of information about the quality of apprenticeship delivery to identify training and development activities for tutors. While there is a commitment to staff training, leaders focus continuing professional development mainly on industrial updates. The strategy for improving teaching practice to ensure that apprentices continue to receive high-quality training is not clear.

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

Tutors work successfully with employers to enable apprentices to carry out high-quality off-the-job training. Apprentices benefit from a broad range of meaningful activities such as coaching from managers in other departments and industry-specific e-learning courses. As a result, they develop new and occupationally relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Tutors use their industrial experience very well to deliver effective apprenticeship programmes. They provide helpful case studies that support apprentices to apply knowledge, skills and behaviours appropriately in their job roles. As a result, apprentices develop their confidence and make a positive contribution to their organisations.

Tutors support apprentices to develop strong literacy skills through report and essay writing. Apprentices submit work of at least the standard required and they take pride in what they produce. In their assignment work, apprentices demonstrate a high level of competence in research and analysis.

Most tutors provide helpful feedback that supports apprentices to improve. They encourage apprentices to expand on their work by including relevant examples that demonstrate application of knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace.

However, in a small minority of cases, tutors do not set clear enough actions for improvement. For example, a few tutors refer apprentices who fail their assignments back to the study guides and do not give apprentices enough support to improve. As a result, a small proportion of apprentices do not learn from their mistakes.

The small minority of apprentices on English and mathematics functional skills courses receive insufficient support from their tutors. As a result, they struggle to develop their skills and confidence to pass the functional skills examinations.

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

Leaders implement appropriate policies to safeguard apprentices. They provide apprentices with useful information on how to keep themselves safe and have effective systems for reporting concerns. Apprentices benefit from support about how to stay safe when online and the risks of not following general data protection regulations when dealing with debt collection. Apprentices feel safe.

Leaders recruit staff safely. All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and governors, have undertaken appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders effectively use information and updates from external sources to inform the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and safeguarding guidelines. Governors successfully hold leaders to account for their compliance with safeguarding legislation.

Leaders take reasonable steps to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. They have completed an appropriate risk assessment which governors review quarterly. However, actions to address the gaps identified in the risk assessment are unclear.

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