

Metro Bank Plc

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.

In 2017, Metro Bank became an employer provider and received funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency through the apprenticeship levy to deliver apprentices directly. At the time of the monitoring visit, 38 apprentice cashiers were all studying towards a level 2 financial services customer adviser standards-based apprenticeship.

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 a clear rationale for the apprenticeship programme. They work with external partners in order to attract apprentices from diverse backgrounds. Apprentices have no previous experience of banking and many would not meet the traditional entry criteria for a role in the banking sector.

Senior leaders have a strong commitment to staff training. Apprentices are able to progress quickly to further training such as banking qualifications. Apprentices who complete their qualification remain in the company as cashiers or are promoted to higher scale posts.

Managers have planned the programme well to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. This includes a range of different learning opportunities, such as an intense training period at the start of the programme, master classes and online training modules.

Leaders have recruited an apprenticeship delivery team with a range of sector knowledge and educational experience. This ensures that the team has the expertise to deliver both banking sector knowledge and personal development elements relating to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Managers have begun to identify areas for improvement in the provision and take appropriate improvement action as a result. They recognise that quality assurance of the

programme is not yet sufficiently robust. They do not yet analyse information to determine whether outcomes for apprentices are improving for different cohorts.

Leaders have been slow to plan the integration of English and mathematics skills as part of apprentices' vocational training. Their plans for the assessment of the speaking and listening component of functional skills English are underdeveloped. As a result, a few apprentices are unclear about the requirements for this component of their programme.

In the first year of the programme, around a quarter of apprentices left before completing, although of those who stayed almost all achieved their qualification in the planned time. Of the current cohort of apprentices, a high proportion are still on programme.

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 have adapted and extended the training for cashiers effectively, to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. The training and assessment plan are matched well to apprentices' job roles and enable apprentices to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Apprentices apply these confidently in their workplaces.

Apprentices are clear about the requirements of an apprenticeship at the start of their programme. Apprentices benefit from the opportunity to gain a level 2 qualification, as well as their apprenticeship.

Apprentices greatly benefit from off-the-job training and development. They attend well-planned taught training sessions. Trainers relate the learning skilfully to apprentices' work as cashiers in the banking sector. Apprentices demonstrate mature attitudes to their learning, they are keen to learn, and they work productively in the master classes. However, trainers do not use strategies effectively enough to check learning, or to allow apprentices to explore topics further through responses to questions.

Apprentices develop a range of relevant new skills, knowledge and behaviours. They confidently build a rapport with customers while dealing with problems. They have developed their understanding of how to use bank systems correctly, such as how to make international payments and process high value transactions. Apprentices regularly reflect on the individual development of their skills and knowledge, particularly in individual reviews and in their written portfolios.

Apprentices benefit from helpful feedback on their assessed work, which enables them to understand how they can improve their work further. They make good progress in working towards the apprenticeship standards.

Apprentices do not benefit from sufficient opportunities in their vocational training to develop their skills further in English and mathematics. Apprentices who need to achieve functional skills English are not clear enough about the speaking and listening component of their functional skills English examinations.

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

Managers and trainers have undertaken appropriate training to carry out their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding of apprentices.

Managers have taken account of the risks to all employees and have created policies and procedures to mitigate these risks. Managers have also put in place an effective employee assistance scheme to support apprentices should they become vulnerable or need additional support.

Apprentices feel safe at work and in their training. They benefit from well produced materials relating to safeguarding and British values. They have a clear overview of potential risks and how to keep themselves safe in the banking environment. For example, they become aware of procedures to follow in the event of a local incident and are made aware of opening and closing safety procedures and the risks of online grooming.

Managers have not yet put in place reporting procedures to record and monitor safeguarding incidents, and they currently only report by exception. While many human resources policies relate to the company's approach to safeguarding, managers do not currently follow a specific safeguarding policy. Therefore, they have not yet established the protocols to be followed should a safeguarding incident occur.

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