

Activ First Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Jonny Wright, 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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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 three themes set out below.

Activ First Ltd began to deliver apprenticeships in November 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 115 apprentices, of whom 90 were on standards-based programmes. The large majority of apprentices on standards-based programmes were on level 3 apprenticeships in team leading, leisure duty management, personal training, customer service specialist, business administration, facilities management and assessor coach. The remainder were on a level 4 assessor coach programme and a level 5 leadership and management programme. The 25 apprentices on frameworks were on level 2 programmes in exercise and fitness, leisure operations, physical education, schools sports and business administration, and level 3 programmes in personal trainer and youthwork. Activ First Ltd works with employers mainly in the sports and leisure industry in East Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Walsall and London.

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 extensive experience in the sports and leisure industry, and they use this well to deliver apprenticeship programmes. They have established very close working relationships with employers, and they deliver sports and leisure programmes that benefit the employers that they work with. Apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours and make a valuable contribution to the workplace.

Staff have good industry experience and are well qualified for their roles. Leaders and managers provide staff with relevant training to improve their practice. For example, staff learn how to support apprentices to improve their English and mathematics skills.

Apprentices are recruited with integrity and go into the most appropriate apprenticeship. Leaders and managers liaise effectively with employers and conduct comprehensive checks, including of English and mathematics skills, to ensure that prospective apprentices are suitable for an apprenticeship. Most apprentices stay on their programme.

Leaders and managers have a clear and detailed overview of the progress that apprentices are making. Assessors provide managers with accurate reports about apprentices' progress. If apprentices fall behind, managers ensure that assessors take swift action to help apprentices catch up. Consequently, most apprentices make expected progress towards completing their programme. A very high proportion of apprentices complete their apprenticeship on time and gain full-time employment.

Managers and assessors work closely with employers to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. The training enables apprentices to develop the correct knowledge, skills and behaviours for their job role. However, in a few instances training is not planned precisely enough with employers to enable apprentices to progress as quickly as they could.

Although leaders and managers evaluate the quality of apprenticeships, the processes that they use are not sufficiently rigorous to give them an accurate picture of all the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. As a consequence, they are not able to implement improvement actions swiftly enough.

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

Assessors and employers provide apprentices with effective off-the-job training. Apprentices take part in work shadowing, use online resources and benefit from individual coaching. As a result of their training, most apprentices make appropriate progress in developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they require to be effective in the workplace.

Apprentices gain useful qualifications alongside their apprenticeship in, for example, aqua fit, gym class delivery and pool plant maintenance. As a result, their employers give them additional responsibilities at work.

Apprentices develop good vocational skills which enable them to make positive contributions at work. For example, customer service apprentices develop the skills and confidence required to listen carefully to vulnerable clients.

Most assessors provide helpful feedback to apprentices so that they know how to make improvements. Apprentices produce written work of an appropriate standard for their level of study.

Apprentices who take English and mathematics qualifications improve their skills by accessing online learning and through helpful guidance from their assessors. Assessors frequently discuss with apprentices how to apply these skills in the workplace.

Apprentices benefit from frequent contact with their assessors. Assessors plan assessments and reviews to fit in with apprentices' work patterns and most employers are involved in the review of apprentices' progress.

Employers and assessors provide helpful on-going advice and guidance on future learning and training opportunities, including continuation in full-time employment after apprentices complete their programme.

Assessors do not use information about apprentices' prior learning and skills well enough to plan learning. They set targets for apprentices that are often too generic and do not help apprentices to make rapid progress.

A small number of apprentices have gone through end-point assessment. Most have achieved a distinction or merit grade. However, too many apprentices have only a basic understanding of what is required of them to be successful at end-point assessment.

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

Leaders and managers have put in place policies and procedures that they use to keep young people and adults safe from harm or abuse. They have established effective measures to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is appropriately trained and experienced. The DSL provides helpful support and advice to staff and apprentices and makes good use of external support when appropriate.

Apprentices feel safe in their workplace. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep safe and they know who to contact should they have any concerns. Too many apprentices, however, do not have a good enough understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism or local risks such as 'county lines' and modern slavery.

Leaders and managers carry out appropriate background checks to confirm that staff are suitable for working with apprentices. They ensure that staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

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