

Sigma UK Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the ESFA. 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 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Sigma UK Group Limited was established in 2017, following the purchase of SMART Development Training Limited. Sigma UK Group Limited has offered directly funded training since January 2018. Sigma UK Group Limited offers courses in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), employability, and health and social care. Unemployed and employed adult learners are recruited at entry level, level 1 and level 2. The large majority of learners enrol on short courses that provide them with qualifications to access employment. A small minority of learners are employed and enrol on health and social care distance-learning courses. During 2018/19, 499 learners studied with Sigma UK Group Limited.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? **Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders have set a clear strategic purpose and strategy. Leaders have extensive experience of delivering training for other providers as a subcontractor. Leaders use their experience well to plan and deliver relevant short courses for the large majority of adult learners.

Leaders and managers use funding well to meet the needs of adult learners. As a result, the large majority of unemployed learners are supported to improve their skills for work or for moving into higher education. Managers and staff work well with partners to deliver courses across the country. The large majority of learners studying on English, mathematics, ICT and employability courses achieve their qualifications.

Managers have recruited experienced tutors. Tutors have extensive expertise in the subjects they teach. Leaders and managers provide good support for tutors. Tutors undertake frequent and relevant training, which is effective in improving their skills as tutors.

Leaders and managers have responded well to the information they receive on local skills shortages. They have developed effective relationships with partners including Jobcentre Plus (JCP), employers and universities. Staff based at the London training centre work with local universities. For example, they deliver courses for learners who do not have the qualifications they need to access nursing degrees. Learners gain the qualifications they need to move on to higher education.

The majority of learners move on to the next level of study when they complete their course. Managers do not routinely collect or analyse the information on what learners do when they complete their learning with Sigma UK Group Limited.

Leaders and managers recognise the need to improve their quality assurance arrangements. Managers do not evaluate well enough the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners. Managers have not yet identified the impact of the actions they have taken to ensure quality improvement.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? **Reasonable progress**

Learners enjoy their learning and gain new skills and knowledge. Learners studying on English, mathematics and ICT functional skills courses improve their confidence. They are able to complete job applications and prepare for interviews in readiness to enter employment.

Tutors provide effective support for the large majority of learners studying in English, mathematics and ICT. Learners improve their English and mathematical skills to support them into work and within their local communities. Learners have developed the English skills they need to become employed and gain jobs, for example with national taxi companies.

Tutors assess learners' English, mathematical and vocational skills before they start on their course. Tutors plan learning programmes well by using the information they have about learners' starting points. Most learners benefit from the support they receive to help them achieve on their course. Tutors provide learners who have anxiety issues with helpful strategies to manage these effectively and to be able to remain on their course. Most learners complete their course.

Most health and social care distance-learning learners apply their learning well in their workplace. They use their new knowledge to manage and support clients with dementia, and to support families who have relatives in end-of-life care. However, tutors do not provide learners with the feedback they need to ensure learners achieve to the level of which they are capable.

Managers and staff have recognised that the quality of recording learners' progress requires further improvement. They have recently introduced a system to monitor and track this more accurately. Managers and tutors of functional skills qualifications closely monitor learners' progress. However, managers in health and social care do not yet have access to this system. As a result, they do not have an accurate view of learners' progress.

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

Senior leaders have put in place an appropriate safeguarding policy, which includes reference to the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have completed safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty awareness training. The designated safeguarding lead and designated safeguarding officers have completed appropriate training.

Managers have produced a detailed safeguarding handbook for staff. As a result, staff have a good understanding of how to identify and report their concerns. Staff frequently review health and safety and safeguarding during team meetings. Managers appropriately record the very small number of incidents that occur.

Leaders and managers carry out safer recruitment and selection procedures when recruiting staff. All staff receive appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Most learners receive information on safeguarding during induction. They know to whom to report their concerns. A small number of health and social care learners do not know this information well enough.

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