

# Introtrain & Forum Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Bob Cowdrey, 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.

Introtrain & Forum Limited (IFL) is a privately owned hairdressing and beauty therapy training provider based in Oxford. It offers apprenticeships mainly in Oxfordshire. In January 2018, IFL received funding directly from ESFA to deliver apprenticeships. Training takes place at employers' premises through, in the main, individual coaching sessions. Training also takes place at IFL training salons, with IFL staff at Oxford International College of Beauty Therapy and through open learning. There were 86 non-levy-funded apprentices on programme at the time of the monitoring visit, with most aged 16–18. Apprentices study standards-based level 2 apprenticeships in hairdressing, barbering and customer service and level 2 and level 3 apprenticeship frameworks in hairdressing and beauty therapy.

### Themes

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

**Reasonable progress**

The directors have delivered traineeships and apprenticeships as a subcontractor to a lead provider since 2001 and have a clear rationale for their current apprenticeship offer. They have maintained close working relationships with employers, who benefit from the expertise and knowledge that IFL staff contribute. Employers continue to play an important role in planning high-quality training and provide plenty of time for off-the-job coaching and open learning. Staff from IFL are in contact with employers frequently and quickly raise any concerns about apprentices' progress. Several employers are qualified assessors and frequently assess apprentices. All employers interviewed during the monitoring visit displayed a thorough knowledge of the standards apprenticeships, including the Gateway arrangements and end-point assessment. A few barbering apprentices have successfully passed mock end-point assessments.

Directors provide good governance of their provision and evaluate the quality effectively. They understand key strengths and areas that need improving and

frequent team meetings ensure that these are closely monitored, and actions taken. Directors recognise that targets in their improvement plan are not always specific enough to enable them to know when they have achieved them. Leaders track the off-the-job learning of apprentices carefully and understand the progress that apprentices make. Few apprentices leave early. A small minority leave their employers. IFL staff quickly find new employers for those apprentices who need them to ensure that they continue with their training.

All IFL staff are subject experts and provide excellent support for employers and apprentices to help develop apprentices' knowledge and practical skills. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices are making good progress towards achieving their apprenticeship. Leaders have recently introduced a revised framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning further, but it is too early to comment fully on the impact.

**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**

Managers ensure that apprentices get good, well-planned training in employers' salons and IFL training salons. Highly experienced salon managers and stylists within the workplace ensure that apprentices learn the latest salon techniques and practices. As a result, apprentices make a significant and valued contribution to employers' work. Many apprentices arrange their own clients and develop good communication skills and self-confidence quickly.

IFL staff use open learning well to provide theory training as an alternative for apprentices who do not want to attend formal training sessions. Staff visit the workplaces frequently and provide effective one-to-one support for apprentices to help them complete assignments. Staff give good feedback on apprentices' written work and correct spelling and grammatical errors where they are evident. Apprentices have a good understanding of ratios and proportions and the need for accuracy when preparing chemical solutions for styling. This helps them become confident in their job roles.

Most employers attend reviews with IFL staff and apprentices and engage in frank and useful discussions to ensure that they know the progress apprentices are making and what they need to do to develop their skills further. A few apprentices record salon tasks and do not focus enough on the knowledge and behaviours they have gained. Staff set targets for unit completion and do not always place sufficient emphasis on apprentices' development of personal and employability skills or the practice of their English and mathematical skills in the salons.

Managers make sure that they recruit apprentices carefully. They provide a thorough induction that includes comprehensive careers advice and guidance. This prepares

apprentices and employers effectively for the apprenticeships. Staff use initial assessment well and give careful consideration to apprentices' development of English and mathematics. Dedicated staff provide good individual support in the training salons and workplace and as a result, nearly all apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications at the first attempt.

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

Directors and managers make sure that apprentices are safe. All IFL staff complete safeguarding training when they start at IFL and detailed records are kept and monitored to ensure that staff keep up to date with their training. Apprentices know safeguarding staff at IFL and how to contact them. Training consultants discuss safeguarding topics and the 'Prevent' duty in detail at induction and during meetings with employers and apprentices.

The directors have a comprehensive 'Prevent' action plan that is reviewed frequently to ensure that risks are identified and controlled. Apprentices are very knowledgeable about chemicals and solutions used in hairdressing and beauty therapy and use protective equipment appropriately when it is required.

A director of IFL is an active member of the Oxfordshire Children's Safeguarding Board and maintains strong links with support agencies. Well-trained and qualified designated safeguarding officers record safeguarding incidents carefully. They involve external agencies when needed, but they do not always ensure that follow-up actions are recorded in sufficient detail to make sure of the impact of their actions.

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