

Certas Energy UK Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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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.

Certas Energy UK Limited (Certas) is one of the largest independent distributors of fuel and lubricants in the UK. Certas received its first publicly funded contract for apprenticeships in March 2017 and started to deliver apprenticeships in November 2017. Currently, 30 apprentices are on apprenticeships at level 2 and level 3. Apprentices follow standards in customer service practitioner, large goods vehicle (LGV) driver, property maintenance operative, team leader/supervisor, and unified communications technician. Certas employs all the apprentices. Courses run in Certas depots throughout the UK.

Themes

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

Leaders and managers have a clear strategy for delivering apprenticeships to meet skills shortages within Certas. They offer programmes that help apprentices achieve qualifications and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their job roles effectively. Recruitment of apprentices is rigorous.

Managers ensure that staff have extensive specialist expertise and current knowledge. For example, training staff on the driving programme maintain their registration in accordance with the European agreement concerning international carriage of dangerous goods by road.

Programme managers have established highly effective links in each depot to ensure that apprentices receive good support at work. All apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training during working hours, which they log accurately, and managers monitor closely.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the provision. After accurately identifying that the late introduction of functional skills had led to too many apprentices leaving the programme early, managers intervened to redesign the

delivery of functional skills in accordance with apprentices' needs. Subsequently, very few apprentices now leave their programme early. Functional skills success rates are now high. Almost all apprentices pass the examinations at the first attempt. However, most apprentices remain slightly behind target.

Current processes for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment are not specific enough to drive improvement. Feedback to training staff following observations places too little importance on what apprentices learn and the progress they make. Very few reports contain clear actions to improve. The apprenticeship manager uses apprentices' feedback effectively to inform improvement. However, the monitoring of the quality of the subcontracted provision is not sufficiently rigorous.

Governance is strong. Board members receive valuable information about safeguarding arrangements, and apprentices' progress and achievements. They provide appropriate support and challenge to senior leaders and managers. The board does not receive enough information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Programme managers and training staff have significant expertise and knowledge of Certas. They use their experience appropriately to coach apprentices. As a result, apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours, and improve their efficiency and effectiveness. For example, customer service apprentices become more confident in assisting clients who require support when paying their fuel bills.

Managers recognise that, because of their training, apprentices become more productive. Most apprentices can clearly articulate the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they have developed and how these improve their performance at work.

Programme managers monitor apprentices' progress closely at monthly review meetings. They discuss the training that the apprentices receive and what they need to do next. This includes additional company-wide training such as managing change and training for the high-performance culture. However, apprentices' training plans are insufficiently detailed.

Most apprentices produce written assignments of the appropriate standard. Training staff provide useful feedback to apprentices on their work, which includes clear guidance on how to make improvements.

Apprentices develop the appropriate knowledge and skills in English and mathematics to complete their programmes. Too few apprentices who are exempt from functional skills requirements develop their English and mathematics further.

Following issues with the quality of apprentices' portfolios, training staff have ensured that they now prepare apprentices successfully for their end-point assessment. Consequently, the few apprentices who progressed to end-point assessment passed at their first attempt.

Programme managers have significantly improved the quality of information, advice and guidance, recruitment and selection. Before starting their programmes, apprentices now gain a good understanding of the programme and the support they can expect. Apprentices self-assess their prior knowledge, skills and behaviours related to the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. However, managers do not validate this. Often, apprentices' self-assessment of their starting points is not accurate.

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

Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding. They have developed and implemented detailed policies to keep apprentices safe. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL are well trained.

Leaders check that staff are safe to work with apprentices. All staff receive training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They understand the arrangements to protect them and know how to report concerns. Apprentices have an appropriate awareness of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices on driving programmes are vigilant to the raised threat when transporting dangerous goods.

The DSL and deputy DSL deal with safeguarding concerns efficiently. They investigate them thoroughly and close them when appropriate. They are also establishing closer links with external specialist agencies to ensure they make appropriate referrals when required.

The DSL and the human resources director ensure that board members are fully informed about safeguarding concerns.

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