

# Always Consult Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 2495142

**Name of lead inspector:** Tracey Mace-Akroyd, 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.

Always Consult Ltd started to deliver levy-funded apprenticeship training programmes in December 2017. It provides standards-based programmes at level 3 and level 5 for the healthcare profession. Currently, 131 apprentices are on these programmes of whom 118 are on the team leader/supervisor apprenticeship at level 3 and 13 are on the operations/departmental manager apprenticeship at level 5. Always Consult Ltd provides apprenticeship training for the workforce at two NHS foundation trusts (the Trust) in the North East region and one NHS foundation trust in the South West of England.

### Themes

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders have established a curriculum with the clear purpose of developing the leadership and management competencies of apprentices employed in the healthcare sector. They have strong links with the Trust. Leaders design programmes skilfully to meet employment needs in the healthcare sector. They provide good support to newly qualified staff to help them develop the leadership knowledge and skills that they need for specialist roles. Leaders use medical research and specialist practitioners effectively to decide on the most appropriate programmes and content.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices with integrity. Apprentices receive helpful information, advice and guidance at the start of their programme. They benefit from independent careers advice and guidance to help them prepare for their specialist careers. At the end of their programme, a high proportion of apprentices move on to manage teams or to specialist training roles in areas such as clinical surgery and radiology.

Leaders have a clear view of the performance and quality of the apprenticeship provision. They make good use of quality assurance arrangements and feedback from apprentices and employers, and they implement actions quickly to improve performance. Leaders recognised that apprentices and coaches were unclear about what to expect at the end-point assessment (EPA). Leaders investigated this issue

thoroughly with the EPA provider. Coaches and apprentices now receive clear guidance. Current apprentices prepare thoroughly for the EPA.

Leaders ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training. Coaches work effectively with the Trust to ensure that most apprentices benefit from frequent and flexible training which is of a high quality. This includes the shadowing of senior clinical practitioners and completing management improvement projects.

**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**

Coaches make good use of their expertise to deliver training that helps apprentices to develop their knowledge of leadership concepts and how to apply them in the workplace. For example, apprentices use their leadership and decision-making knowledge and skills when organising a large complex team in response to a cardiac-arrest situation. A high proportion of apprentices achieve their qualification, gain promotion and move on to the next stage of their career.

Coaches provide good support to apprentices. They ensure that most apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to manage their teams and to communicate effectively with colleagues, patients and the public.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the behaviours and actions of others. This helps them to resolve conflict, deal with performance issues and handle stressful situations in public more confidently. Most apprentices develop the leadership competencies that they need to do their job effectively. Consequently, they make valuable contributions to the Trust's business and services.

Apprentices develop good English, mathematics and digital skills. They apply their academic style and referencing skills effectively, particularly when completing online assignments and management projects. Apprentices for whom English is not a first language achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.

Coaches make good use of regular reviews with apprentices. They pay close attention to the progress that apprentices make towards achieving their qualification. Apprentices who make slow progress owing to the demands of their work receive good support that enables them to catch up.

Coaches assess apprentices' written work and their knowledge, skills and behaviours frequently. They provide helpful feedback during reviews. Most apprentices use the feedback that they receive effectively and produce work of a high standard. However, coaches do not challenge a very small proportion of apprentices sufficiently to achieve the higher grades of which they are capable.

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

Leaders have developed and implement appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff and apprentices know whom to contact if they have a concern. The designated safeguarding officers implement referral procedures appropriately.

Leaders provide staff and apprentices with effective safeguarding training. They place high importance on helping apprentices to be healthy and emotionally and physically resilient.

Apprentices learn about and apply safe working practices as part of their programmes and through the Trust's extensive training. They are fully aware of the risks to their personal safety when in stressful situations or responding to a crisis in a public place.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, coaches do not reinforce apprentices' understanding of the full range of safeguarding topics sufficiently during reviews. Leaders identify correctly that they should ensure that coaches and apprentices have a better understanding of the safeguarding risks in their own locality.

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