

# Universal Learning Streams (USL) Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1280315

**Name of lead inspector:** Bev Ramsell, 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.

In October 2017 Universal Learning Streams (USL) Limited received its own publicly funded contract. The company delivers apprenticeship frameworks in care leadership and management at level 5, health and social care at level 3, and residential childcare at level 3. It also delivers the apprenticeship standard in lead adult care worker at level 3. Currently, 128 apprentices are on apprenticeship programmes. Most apprentices are studying apprenticeship frameworks.

### Themes

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

Leaders recognise the importance of employing qualified sector professionals. All trainers hold relevant qualifications within their vocational specialism. Additionally, all trainers hold functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at level 2. A few trainers hold an information and communication technology (ICT) qualification at level 2. All trainers are working towards formal teaching qualifications. As a result, apprentices receive good support to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Managers recruit apprentices with integrity to ensure that they benefit from the apprenticeship. Managers test candidates' vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours before starting an apprenticeship. Through this, managers identify accurately the starting points of each candidate. Those who demonstrate a high knowledge and skills base in excess of the requirements of the apprenticeship receive offers of other training that is more appropriate to their needs and aspirations. Consequently, managers ensure that all apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of the apprenticeship.

Leaders and trainers plan well for end-point assessment (EPA). Trainers have a clear understanding of how to develop apprentices for the EPA. Apprentices know what they need to do to achieve. They know how to achieve a distinction grade and are confident in their ability to do so.

Leaders ensure that programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. For example, they require employers to sign a contract making them aware of their commitment to the apprenticeship. However, a small minority of employers have not applied their commitment to the 20% off-the-job training requirement. As a result, a few apprentices complete work in their own time.

Managers' observations of teaching and learning are not effective. They observe trainers' workshop sessions regularly, but they give insufficient attention to learning. Feedback does not help trainers to understand how to develop learning more effectively.

**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**

Information, advice and guidance at the start of the programme are effective in ensuring that apprentices are on the right course at the right level. Most apprentices are clear about the steps they need to take to achieve their career aspirations.

Managers value the contribution that apprentices make at work. Apprentices develop effective new knowledge and skills. For example, apprentices work in roles that facilitate care users' supported living. They confidently support the people they work with to complete daily tasks at home. As a result, these individuals become more independent. Apprentices benefit from effective additional training at work, such as in dementia awareness, mental health first aid, and moving and handling training. As a result, apprentices quickly become knowledgeable about and skilled in their roles. They are better able to care for the people that they support.

Trainers visit apprentices frequently in the workplace. They work closely with workplace managers to provide apprentices with well-structured training activities. As a result, apprentices make at least the expected progress with their studies. Where apprentices fall behind, effective support is in place to help them catch up.

Trainers do not develop apprentices' English, mathematical and digital skills sufficiently. They do not plan support for apprentices quickly enough. Consequently, apprentices start their functional skills training too late in their programme to be able to make rapid progress in developing the required knowledge and skills.

Trainers do not provide feedback that is sufficiently developmental. It does not identify what apprentices need to do to improve their written work or deepen their knowledge and understanding. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same mistakes. Trainers correctly identify spelling and grammatical errors.

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

Leaders have appointed a new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who has appropriate qualifications and is very experienced. The quality director provides good support to the DSL.

Leaders intervene quickly when potential safeguarding concerns arise. The DSL takes appropriate action to support apprentices when needed. The DSL works with the apprentice and the employer to find a resolution. Apprentices rightly feel fully supported.

Leaders train staff regularly in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. However, local area updates are not included within this training. As a result, trainers are not clear about concerns within their local regions and cannot accurately advise apprentices about local threats.

Managers complete appropriate risk assessments of all employers. However, managers do not systematically review employers' safeguarding or 'Prevent' duty policies. As a result, managers do not always have a clear and detailed enough understanding of employers' safeguarding practice.

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