

# APA Procurement Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Kathleen Tyler, Ofsted Inspector  
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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:**  
Anchor Business Centre  
Frankland Road  
Blagrove  
Swindon  
SN5 8YZ



## 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 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

APA Procurement Training Limited (APA) is based in Swindon. It was established to deliver the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) qualifications. It started delivering a level 4 standards-based apprenticeship programme in commercial procurement and supply in 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 12 apprentices were enrolled on this apprenticeship.

### Themes

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

#### **Insufficient progress**

Leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of the requirements of APA's apprenticeship provision. The curriculum offered focuses too narrowly on apprentices' off-the-job training and gaining units of the qualification. Leaders do not monitor and evaluate all aspects of the apprenticeship adequately. They do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Consequently, they do not have enough oversight of the quality of the apprentices' experience to secure timely improvements.

Leaders do not ensure that employers are routinely involved in supporting apprentices' development and progress. They have no clearly identified strategy or planned actions to engage employers more fully. Although employers initially agree to be involved in the apprenticeships, in practice this is not always the case.

Leaders were slow to introduce an initial assessment of apprentices' prior learning and experience. Leaders and apprentices do not take account of, or formally record, apprentices' development of new skills, knowledge and behaviours gained in their workplaces. As a result, it is difficult to assess the overall progress that apprentices are making. Leaders have no formal record of whether apprentices are receiving their full entitlement to off-the-job training.

Early in 2019, leaders recognised the value of gathering formal feedback from apprentices and employers to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. However, very few apprentices and employers have completed this feedback. As a result, formal feedback is still not effective enough in enabling APA to secure improvements to the apprenticeships.

APA developed a clear strategy to implement apprenticeships, which closely match their specialist vocational skills and expertise and employers' needs. Trainers are vocationally skilled, knowledgeable and experienced in delivering the level 4 diploma in procurement and supply.

Apprentices are right to value highly the flexible delivery and quality of the off-the-job training. Trainers and apprentices have a good understanding of the requirements for the end-point assessment.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?      Insufficient progress**

Too many apprentices view the apprenticeships merely as means to gain the CIPS professional level 4 qualification. Prior to September 2019, trainers did not assess apprentices' starting points. Apprentices' job roles and experiences too often match the apprenticeship qualification. As a result, they are not developing new skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Employers have too little involvement in the planning, review and assessment of apprentices' development and progress. For example, employers' contributions to progress reviews are either too cursory or missing. APA staff do not take enough account of employers' views on the development of apprentices' new skills and behaviours in their workplaces.

Apprentices do not all benefit from frequent progress reviews. When these do take place, trainers do not include discussions of all aspects of the apprenticeships. They focus too narrowly on unit completion towards achieving the CIPS diploma.

Apprentices benefit from well-planned and sequenced off-the-job training. Trainers relate learning in the classroom-based training sessions to apprentices' workplace contexts well. They enable apprentices to reflect on their developing professional practice.

Trainers provide apprentices with good impartial individual support, which enables them to overcome issues they may face with their apprenticeship. As apprentices approach the end of their apprenticeship, trainers provide useful individual careers advice and guidance. Apprentices have the information that they need to decide on their next steps.

Trainers mark apprentices' work frequently and thoroughly. They provide apprentices with detailed and constructive feedback and check the work carefully for errors in spelling and sentence structure. This feedback and further discussions enable apprentices to improve their writing skills and the quality of their assessed work. Apprentices' off-the-job training provides relevant opportunities for apprentices to develop their skills in mathematics.

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

Leaders have not established effective safeguarding arrangements. Directors have very recently identified new safeguarding procedures, but they have not implemented them. The designated safeguarding lead has not completed appropriate training for the role, and so is unable to provide informed support to apprentices at risk.

Leaders do not meet the statutory 'Prevent' duty requirements. They have not provided an assessment of any potential risks associated with extremism and radicalisation faced by apprentices. They have not established any links with external specialist agencies for referral, advice or guidance.

Apprentices feel safe in training and in their workplaces. However, apprentices do not know enough about safeguarding in theory or practice. Only a small minority of apprentices can recall any detail about safeguarding or the 'Prevent' duty, following their initial induction. Most are unaware of whom to contact about any safeguarding concerns. Apprentices have few opportunities to discuss safeguarding with their trainers or employers.

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