

Inspection of WDR Limited

Inspection dates:

29 October–1 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

WDR Limited is a commercial training organisation that has been operating for 49 years, delivering mostly leadership and management training. It began to receive public funding for apprenticeships in August 2017. WDR Limited delivers standards-based apprenticeships at levels 3, 4 and 5 in team leadership, business administration, data analysis, software development, associate project management and operations and department management.

At the time of inspection 29 apprentices were receiving training, all of whom were adult apprentices and levy funded. Over three quarters of them were on the level 3 standard in team leadership and the level 4 standard in data analysis. WDR Limited works with companies and corporations in the South East of England and does not subcontract any of its provision.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Most apprentices on the level 3 apprenticeship in team leading and the level 4 apprenticeship data analysis, which comprise the provider's largest groups of learners, do not benefit from specialist occupational coaches to support them in their learning. Their employers do not contribute to the development and planning of their programme. As a result, apprentices do not develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to progress in their careers.

The small numbers of apprentices on the level 5 apprenticeship in operations management and the level 4 associate project management apprenticeship are motivated and enjoy their learning experience. They develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to move forward with their careers. They are well supported by their specialist occupational coach who works closely with their employer to ensure that the apprentices contribute positively to their workplace.

Apprentices show respect and courtesy to each other and demonstrate a high level of professionalism. Apprentices are safe and are treated fairly. They can express their views and feel listened to when they do. Apprentices develop an effective awareness of safeguarding topics and are aware of how to stay safe online.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have not made sure that the apprenticeship curriculum meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship for all the occupational areas they deal with.

Leaders, managers and staff do not work sufficiently with employers to develop and plan an apprenticeship curriculum to meet the needs of the employers' business. For apprentices on the level 3 team leader and the level 4 data analyst apprenticeships leaders have too narrowly focused the curriculum on completing the content of the apprenticeship standards. They fail to prioritise apprentices' personal development and the development of the specific skills that their employer requires. For a small minority of apprentices on the level 5 operations management and level 4 associate project management standards, staff use employers' and apprentices' requirements more effectively to plan the curriculum. These apprentices are on a programme which is closely aligned to their requirements.

For the large majority of apprentices, staff place a disproportionate focus on assessing apprentices' knowledge and skills as opposed to developing new ones. Managers and staff do not consider the prior learning and experience of apprentices when they plan and order the curriculum for level 3 team leader and level 4 data analyst apprentices. As a result, these apprentices do not develop substantial new knowledge and skills or build on what they already knew and could do when they started the apprenticeship.

Not all staff meet frequently with apprentices' line managers to plan the

development of apprentices' workplace skills. Consequently, apprentices are not able to consolidate their learning through job-related activities. Most coaching staff do not use progress reviews with apprentices effectively. They focus too much on the completion of work tasks. They do not provide apprentices with the knowledge that will help them to complete these tasks. Most coaches are unable to provide the technical support many apprentices need. They lack the occupational expertise and qualifications needed to effectively support and guide the apprentices. As a result, apprentices do not develop the personal, professional and social skills such as time management, managing difficult conversations and effective communication that they need to be successful in the workplace.

Staff feel valued and well supported by leaders and managers. Facilitators and assessors have appropriate occupational expertise and qualifications. Where these staff carry out coaching sessions, for example on the level 5 operational management standard, apprentices benefit from detailed reviews of their occupational knowledge and skills and how they are applying these in the workplace.

The majority of apprentices are unsuccessful in completing their programmes. Leaders, managers and employers underestimated the extent of the commitment needed and the time required to complete the apprenticeship. Too many apprentices are unable to cope with the pressure of an apprenticeship alongside their normal jobs. As a result, over half of the apprentices who staff recruited lost motivation and interest in their learning and development and left the programme. However, all the apprentices who reach their end-point assessment have been successful. Just over half achieve merit or distinction grades. Leaders and managers have now revised their approach to preparing employers and apprentices, but it is not yet possible to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes.

Leaders, managers and staff do not offer high-quality careers advice and guidance to apprentices. Not all personal coaches who give careers advice are suitably qualified and most do not have direct experience in the sector to be able to offer such advice. As a result, apprentices are not aware of the range of options available to them following the completion of their apprenticeship.

Following the monitoring visit leaders acted decisively to establish a governance committee. Leaders have ensured that they benefit from appropriate strategic support and challenge from experts in the further education and skills sector and an employer. Governors have a reasonable understanding and awareness of the organisation's strengths and areas for development. Initial meetings have focused on improving safeguarding and a wide range of actions linked to improving the quality of education; however, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of most of these actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that apprentices are safe. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy lead are suitably trained. They keep themselves up to date with safeguarding developments through regular meetings with external organisations and specialists. Staff have completed useful online training on safeguarding to develop their knowledge. Apprentices have regular discussions with their coaches on a range of topics related to safeguarding. They are aware of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and know how to keep themselves safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that the apprenticeship curriculum, for all occupational areas, meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Improve substantially the poor quality of training for current apprentices and ensure that employers and line managers are consistently engaged in the design, planning and delivery of the apprenticeship curriculum.
- Accurately assess the prior knowledge and skills of every apprentice at the start of their programme and use this information to support all apprentices to develop substantial new knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that all delivery staff are suitably qualified and experienced in the relevant occupational area to enable them to fully and expertly support and guide apprentices.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive high-quality careers advice and guidance from well-qualified staff to help them make decisions about their future.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1280300
Address	Park Lodge 60 London Road Horsham West Sussex RH12 1AY
Contact number	01403 268251
Website	www.wdr.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Christina Dennis
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing coaching sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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