

Bridgeway Consulting Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number:	2554027
Name of lead inspector:	Vicki Locke, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Employer
Address:	Bridgeway House 2, Riverside Way Nottingham NG2 1DP

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Bridgeway Consulting Limited was inspected in June 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Bridgeway Consulting Limited (Bridgeway) is a rail engineering consultancy. Leaders offer the level 2 rail engineering operative for their own employees. At the time of the visit, there were 17 apprentices in training, all of whom were aged 19 and over. Leaders work with one subcontracted partner, Intertrain UK Limited, who provide the initial track induction course.

Since the previous inspection, there have been no new apprentices. Leaders intend to take on new cohorts in the future.

Leaders have recently started to offer Skills Bootcamps in rail possession management. At the time of the visit, there were seven Skills Bootcamp learners.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in ensuring all apprentices receive sufficient off-the-job training time, so they can successfully undertake and complete their studies?	Insufficient progress
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Leaders have recently invested in additional training support for current apprentices, all of whom are significantly behind in their studies. Apprentices are all well past their planned end date, including a third who are 12 to 18 months overdue. Apprentices now report improved progress towards completion of their studies and preparation for end-of-course assessments. However, leaders rightly acknowledge that, still, too few apprentices have completed their studies and their end-of-course assessments.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have made changes to the way they monitor apprentices' off-the-job training. They now have better oversight through tracking records and progress review discussions. Leaders consider any issues during their monthly catch-up meetings. They report an overview of apprentices' off-the-job training at board meetings.

Leaders intend to introduce an online platform with future cohorts to continue to improve monitoring off-the-job training. They plan this to include apprentices' reflections about how training links to their job roles.

Current apprentices who are at the end of their course now receive sufficient off-the-job training time to complete work towards achieving their apprenticeship. Despite this, apprentices are significantly behind in their studies, following lengthy gaps in training when they moved departments.

Leaders have now put in place suitable arrangements to avoid any issues with gaps in training when apprentices move departments. The people and development team will have oversight of, and authorise, any departmental moves. This should ensure apprentices continue to receive sufficient off-the-job training time until successful completion of their end-of-course assessments. At the time of the visit, it was too soon to judge the impact of this new initiative.

What progress have leaders made in improving their oversight and understanding of the quality of provision including sub-contracted elements? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced new approaches that provide better oversight and understanding of the quality of provision.

Leaders now review the course at monthly meetings. They carefully consider areas such as apprentice progress, outstanding learning, and completion of progress reviews. This is largely helpful, although discussions do not always include enough focus on future improvement priorities, such as the redesign of training plans.

The board meets every six weeks and receives relevant reports about apprenticeships. This leads to pertinent discussions about the overdue apprentices and what needs to happen, so they successfully complete and achieve their qualifications. The board does not yet receive reports about the quality of the new Skills Bootcamp provision.

Leaders have put in place suitable arrangements for external oversight via a 'critical friend' approach. This work has led to useful changes, such as routine scheduling of progress reviews across the year, and introduction of observations of training.

Leaders now undertake basic observations of training quality. This will include sub-contracted training with future cohorts. Leaders acknowledge that observations do not always consider aspects such as apprentices' understanding of links in training.

Training staff attend quarterly standardisation meetings. They discuss teaching approaches and share best practice. For example, how to use starters to support positive behaviours, and effective use of scenarios as a teaching method.

Leaders now use a thorough quality improvement plan to track and monitor progress. However, the pace of improvement is not swift enough, and links between self-assessment and improvement planning are not always clear.

What progress have leaders made in improving the design of the curriculum, so it helps apprentices and learners to build new knowledge, skills, and behaviours logically and incrementally? **Insufficient progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed the overall structure of the apprenticeship curriculum in readiness for future cohorts. Despite this, they still do not identify well enough how apprentices will develop the specific knowledge and skills they intend them to learn. For example, in month four of the course, leaders plan for apprentices to learn drawings, calibration and sleeper changing. They report that apprentices will learn these subjects through a combination of lessons, independent learning, and on-the-job training. However, this is not specified in enough detail within training plans. It is not clear how apprentices will develop their knowledge, or who is responsible for each aspect of their training. Leaders intend to set this out in a course planner and through the new online platform. At the time of the visit, neither was fully complete.

At a headline level, leaders have made progress. They now map out the knowledge and skills which apprentices should learn in a logical order. For example, future apprentices will complete an intensive initial block of training. This will allow them to learn about track safety essentials, the rail industry, and safe use of tools, before they go on site. Apprentices will then progress onto further topics where they will apply what they learn at work.

In a few subjects, leaders have thought carefully about how apprentices will need to revisit topics which they find hard to remember, such as Pythagoras' theorem in mathematics. At the time of the visit, inspectors were not able to judge the impact of this with new apprentices.

The newly introduced Skills Bootcamps short courses have a clearly defined purpose, to support learners to work in rail possession management. Leaders structure the course content logically, so learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to successfully commence work.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring apprentices and learners have a sound understanding of what they are learning and the progress they are making? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that all apprentices have frequent progress reviews. They recognise that the former process was not fit for purpose. The discussions and documentation now focus more effectively on the progress apprentices make.

During reviews, most apprentices now reflect on where they are in their studies. They work with their trainers to agree what they need to complete next. However, in a few cases, the developmental targets which trainers set apprentices are not as

specific or useful as they could be. For example, trainers direct apprentices to 'prepare for end-of-course assessments' in general terms, rather than provide specific aspects to work on.

Apprentices have an accurate understanding of where they are in their studies. They know they are past their planned end dates because of historical issues. Newly appointed trainers now provide helpful support and extra sessions to assist apprentices to catch up with their studies. As a result, most apprentices are closer to completion of their courses. They have a reasonable grasp of what they need to do to prepare for their end-of-course assessments. A few apprentices benefit from useful preparation work, such as example questions and coaching.

Skills Bootcamp learners understand the progress they make through their short courses. During classes, trainers check their understanding well using questions, quizzes, and activities. This helps learners to prepare for the final tests they will undertake. Learners who are new to the rail industry are well prepared to go out onto track with their mentors for the first time.

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