

Inspection of Tendring District Council (Career Track)

Inspection dates: 3–5 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Tendring District Council (Career Track) is an apprenticeship provider based in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. It has 53 apprentices, studying four standards-based qualifications. 31 apprentices are studying at level 2 and 22 at level 3.

Most Career Track apprentices are employed at borough and district councils in Essex, with the majority of these employed by Tendring District Council. Career Track has recently resumed providing apprenticeships to small businesses in the area and a small proportion of apprentices are employed by these.

At the time of the inspection, Career Track had apprentices studying standards in customer service, business administration and public services. Most apprentices on level 2 are studying the level 2 customer service practitioner standard. Most apprentices on level 3 are studying the level 3 business administrator standard.

Two apprentices have special educational needs and seven have additional learning needs. Career Track has no subcontractors.

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

Apprentices value the opportunity that the Career Track apprenticeships provide to enable them to gain employment with major local employers. These employers provide apprentices with good opportunities to develop their careers in the longer term. Most apprentices work with colleagues who were apprentices previously. Many of these have progressed well in their careers, a few to senior roles in the local councils in which they work. This inspires apprentices to develop their job-related skills to a good standard.

Apprentices are very motivated to successfully complete their training, and most do so. Apprentices develop good attitudes to their learning. They develop a broad range of transferable skills which are needed for a range of roles in most council departments, where the majority are employed. This provides the necessary flexibility to enable most apprentices to secure employment at the end of their apprenticeship.

Apprentices benefit from the good support they receive from their colleagues in the workplace. Apprentices quickly gain confidence and develop professional behaviours by mirroring their more-experienced colleagues. As a result, apprentices maintain good attendance at work, they arrive on time and they dress appropriately.

Apprentices appreciate the regular and ongoing support they are receiving from their assessors during the pandemic. This has enabled apprentices to adapt to working from home and to continue their apprenticeships. Consequently, most apprentices complete their apprenticeships on time, despite the disruption of the pandemic.

Apprentices feel safe. They know who to contact if they have concerns and feel comfortable in discussing any concerns they have with their assessors.

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

Leaders have ensured that the apprentices' programme meets the needs of the employers it serves. Leaders at Career Track target local residents who have low prior-educational achievement and/or low ambition. The apprenticeship programme provides a good route to employment and further training for them. Leaders have high expectations that apprentices will successfully complete their apprenticeship, and the vast majority do so.

Leaders have not ensured that assessors provide learning that meets the requirements of the apprenticeship standards. Assessors do not ensure that apprentices develop a broader range of skills and knowledge in line with the ethos and expectations of the standards. Consequently, assessors still assess apprentices on their competencies rather than on their skills, professional behaviours and

knowledge. As a result, apprentices do not develop a sufficiently broad range of skills or the understanding of how to apply these in a range of contexts as expected by their standard.

Young people who have been in care are often employed as apprentices with one council. These apprentices are employed in the 'virtual school' which provides support for young people when they leave care. Apprentices understand fully the particular challenges faced by care leavers and are empathetic to their circumstances. They use the skills and knowledge they gain from their apprenticeship to provide appropriate and effective help to care leavers.

Leaders have not developed a comprehensive and coherent plan to develop apprentices' wider skills and knowledge in any depth. Aspects of the standards, such as how to develop healthy relationships and how to stay physically and mentally healthy are not effectively taught. Assessors do not discuss issues, such as sexual harassment or workplace bullying with apprentices, to help them to extend their knowledge in these areas.

Assessors and workplace mentors and supervisors support apprentices very well, including those with special educational and additional learning needs. Staff promptly identify apprentices who have a learning support need. Staff put personalised and appropriate support in place to action apprentices' needs. They carefully consider who the most appropriate mentor would be to effectively support the apprentice. As a result, apprentices with learning support needs successfully complete their apprenticeships on time.

Throughout the pandemic, assessors have kept in close contact with apprentices to check on their progress and well-being. Where they are concerned that apprentices are not coping well with working from home, they take rapid action to help them. Assessors, for example, ask workplace supervisors and mentors to contact apprentices more regularly and to arrange more frequent visits to the workplace. Apprentices are signposted to specialist support and provided with resources to help improve their mental health. As a result, apprentices can overcome any challenges and successfully complete their apprenticeships.

Apprentices who work for local councils develop a good awareness of how to become active citizens. Their roles involve serving the public. Many took on new and additional tasks at work to support their local communities through the pandemic. Apprentices also have good opportunities through their roles to volunteer to help at local events, such as acting as marshals and stewards at the Clacton air show. However, leaders have not ensured that apprentices who do not work for local councils have the same breadth of opportunity. As a result, these apprentices do not develop a good understanding of citizenship.

Staff do not provide timely ongoing careers advice and guidance for apprentices. Staff have developed a detailed exit programme which is provided towards the end of each apprenticeship. However, this is too late to meet the needs of apprentices

who have not had a permanent job confirmed by the end of their apprenticeship. Although most apprentices do secure related employment, the delay in supporting them to do so leaves apprentices anxious and insecure.

Leaders do not identify what the areas for improvement are for their apprenticeship provision. Consequently, they have not developed relevant actions to remedy the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. Leaders have not, for example, identified the need to improve the quality of teaching to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard or the need to ensure that the training they provide is appropriately sequenced. As a result, apprentices do not develop a sufficiently broad range of skills and do not commit sufficient knowledge to their long-term memories.

Governance arrangements are insufficient and lack impact. Governors do not ensure that they are provided with useful reports to enable them to challenge leaders' decisions about the quality of education and training or scrutinise whether apprentices progress effectively. As a result, governors do not have a secure understanding of how they can improve the apprenticeship provision. Governors do not receive enough information on the extent to which they meet their statutory duties. Consequently, governors have a superficial oversight of these duties as related to their apprenticeship provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel and are safe at work. They know how to report concerns about safeguarding. Staff check on the health, safety and well-being of their apprentices very regularly and are proactive in taking appropriate action where necessary. Most apprentices have reasonable knowledge about how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and from safeguarding risks in the workplace. They gain this understanding through a range of online courses which they complete during their induction. Apprentices know how to stay safe online and when joining meetings remotely.

Staff do not have sufficient knowledge of local safeguarding to help apprentices contextualise local issues to their own lives. Consequently, apprentices are less knowledgeable about the specific risks in their local area and how these might apply to their daily lives.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must improve the awareness of staff of current and local issues relating to safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism, to ensure that they can help apprentices to understand how these issues may impact on their work and personal lives.
- Leaders must train assessors to be able to teach standards-based apprenticeships effectively. Assessors must ensure that apprentices develop the full range of knowledge, skills and behaviours required by each standard. This includes ensuring that they develop a more effective understanding of British values, appropriate relationships and how to stay mentally and physically healthy.
- Leaders must ensure that staff provide all apprentices with ongoing and timely careers advice and guidance. Staff need to ensure that apprentices understand what career options are available to them once they qualify, in particular, the jobs that are available outside of their current employer's structure.
- Leaders need to develop a thorough quality assurance and quality improvement process to ensure that they identify accurately what they do well and what they need to do to improve, so that apprentices develop a broader and deeper range of knowledge and skills. Leaders need to ensure that governors are provided with useful reports to enable them to challenge leaders' decisions about the quality of education and training and scrutinise whether apprentices progress effectively.
- Governors must improve their oversight of the apprenticeship programme. They must rapidly ensure that they have good oversight of how they meet their statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and equality and diversity, so they are confident that apprentices are safe both at work, in their personal lives and are prepared appropriately for life in modern Britain.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54781
Address	Town Hall Station Road Clacton-On-Sea Essex CO15 1SE
Contact number	01255 686313
Website	www.tendringdc.gov.uk
Principal/CEO	Ian Davidson
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 Training Assessment Team Leader, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection 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 visiting apprentices in the workplace, joining meetings between apprentices and assessors, 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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