

# External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by

Lorndale Aberdeen Limited

## A report by HM Inspectors

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<b>Provider type</b>	<b>Independent Training Provider</b>
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<b>Apprentice numbers</b>	<b>46</b>

## 1. Background

External reviews of Modern Apprenticeship providers are planned collaboratively between the provider and HM Inspectors. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provide information regarding provider performance including key data to support this process.

During the review, a team of HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of training provision and the experiences of apprentices and key stakeholders such as employers. During the visit, the team met with staff, learners and other stakeholders and explored the quality of training delivery, how well the needs of apprentices are met, and approaches to improving quality of provision.

This report summarises the findings from the visit, awards grades for the three elements and highlights areas of positive practice, areas for development, and any associated main points for action. The report will be shared with the provider, Scottish Government, and SDS. For colleges, the report will be shared with the College Principals and Board or Regional Strategic Body, and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). An accompanying short report will be published on Education Scotland's website.

## 2. The provider and its context

Lorndale Aberdeen Limited (Great Western Assessment and Training Centre) was established in 2002 and is a provider of training and assessment for people who wish to work in the early years childcare sector.

Centre staff deliver work-based qualifications through standards developed by national training organisations and are aimed at staff who have either no experience or relatively little experience in childcare or play work. The qualification delivered is a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Social Services (Children and Young People) at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 7.

Lorndale Aberdeen Limited have five centres in the Aberdeen area and provide training to Modern Apprentices in their early learning settings, as well as local authority organisations, privately owned organisations, breakfast clubs and after school clubs.

### 3. Outcomes of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

Leadership and Quality Culture	<b>Excellent</b>
Service Delivery	<b>Very Good</b>
Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices	<b>Very Good</b>

### 4. Summary of review findings

A summary of the findings of HM Inspectors are set out below.

#### 4.1 Leadership and Quality Culture - Grade: Excellent

##### 4.1.1 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training

###### Areas of positive progress

- The senior leadership team work effectively with staff, apprentices, and stakeholders to ensure that high functioning teams work in a positive and collaborative way that aligns well with meeting the learning needs of apprentices.
- Managers host regular self-evaluation meetings to reflect on work practices and discuss feedback received from apprentices, employers, and other stakeholders. Outputs are collated by senior managers, and this ensures programme delivery is enhanced and that any aspects for improvement are monitored closely at follow-up meetings.
- Senior managers invest in an electronic portfolio platform each year, that allows assessors to provide prompt feedback to apprentices when they submit work for assessment. The electronic portfolio meets a range of needs for all stakeholders, including timeous insight for employers into their apprentices' progress, access to digital course materials, and a live tracker for apprentices to monitor their own progress.
- Lorndale senior managers promote a positive working environment that includes a range of support approaches which caters well for individual needs. This approach supports strong MA retention and contributes to high achievement rates.
- Nursery managers and assessors plan apprentice reviews at times that minimises disruption and accommodates apprentice individual preferences for either online or face-to-face meetings. Apprentices comment that assessors provide a high level of support during review activities and that they feel well supported.

###### Area for development

- None identified.

## **4.2 Service Delivery - Grade: Very Good**

### **4.2.1 Delivery of training**

#### **Areas of positive progress**

- All apprentices appreciate the high quality of training provided by staff. Mentors and assessors review their learning regularly, evaluate their skills development and provide a consistent knowledge base. This approach works well and contributes to high completion rates.
- Electronic portfolios allow apprentices to pace their learning, and to engage in activities at a time and place that suit their other commitments. Individual learning and development plans are included in the system, as well as training resources, a portal to submit assessments and a progress tracker. All apprentices are comfortable using these resources and comment that everything they need is provided and that these arrangements work well.
- All apprentices value the adaptable approaches of training centre staff, who adjust their training to accommodate learners' specific needs, and employ alternative methods of collecting evidence. These measures ensure training staff tailor the learning process to meet individual needs.
- Most apprentices have good access to information on legislative requirements that is current, relevant, and of industry standard. This helps ensure apprentices research appropriate themes when completing reflective statements to align with industry regulations.
- All apprentices participate in a range of induction activities including an initial skills assessment when they commence their MA programme. Apprentices value their induction experiences and feel that it prepares them well for their MA.

#### **Areas for development**

- A few apprentices comment that their lack of access to a computer limits their engagement with the electronic portfolio.

### **4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training**

#### **Areas of positive progress**

- Senior managers provide staff with tailored professional learning. This includes legislative requirement updates and helps ensure staff remain aligned with industry standards and best practice approaches.
- All assessors attend regular standardisation meetings where they review current approaches, share good practice, and agree improvements to enhance programme delivery. In addition, informal interventions support prompt changes to teaching approaches to meet individual learning needs.
- Training centre managers gather programme feedback from apprentices, employers and practitioners and this leads to actions for development. Employers and apprentices feel listened to and can readily give examples of positive change as a result of feedback provided.
- Lornedale staff use a range of established quality assurance arrangements well to fulfil awarding body criteria.

- Nursery senior staff who host apprentices in all early learning and childcare (ELC) settings attend fortnightly meetings with assessors. Discussions at meetings focus on apprentice progress, and to identify where additional guidance or support is required.
- Most Nursery managers comment that assessors respond quickly and flexibly to manage apprentices' progress. Learning units are often moved, paused or adjusted, to reflect the tasks and activities being undertaken by apprentices at that time.

#### **Areas for development**

- None identified.

### **4.3 Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices - Grade: Very Good**

#### **4.3.1 Achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery**

##### **Areas of positive progress**

- All apprentices are satisfied with the level of support provided by mentors and assessors. As a result, apprentices are confident speaking with staff around any concerns they have over their wellbeing and safety.
- Training centre assessors provide apprentices with constructive feedback timeously. This ensures apprentices are aware of the progress they are making, the skills they are attaining, and any areas for development or improvement.
- Assessors work flexibly with apprentices to provide opportunities for them to access support and guidance out with planned meeting schedules. This ensures apprentices can source help when it is needed most.

##### **Areas for development**

- Apprentices would benefit from having staff safeguarding procedures included within their induction packs.

#### **4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance**

##### **Areas of positive progress**

- Almost all apprentices continue into employment on completion of their MA programme. This enables the industry to recruit and retain staff, which can otherwise be challenging.
- Lorndale managers promote the MA programme well to raise awareness of career pathways into early years through an inclusive approach. This includes attendance at school career events where staff promote and explain job roles and career options.
- During regular review sessions, apprentices, mentors and assessors discuss the requirements of early years statutory regulations. Apprentices make good use of their electronic portfolio as an online repository for relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.
- The Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC) visits all centres who use Lorndale's services to ensure awarding body standards are met. Where improvement actions are identified, these are shared and implemented across all stakeholder organisations.

- All apprentices are required to read and understand all relevant industry related policies, which are accessed via the electronic portfolio. This activity is recorded and contributes towards completion of apprentices' induction process.

#### **Areas for development**

- None identified.

### **4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes**

#### **Areas of positive progress**

- Assessors collaborate well with employers to select optional units from the MA framework that align closely with their business needs and apprentice job roles. This approach supports employers and apprentices in tailoring their programme to meet individual needs.
- Apprentice achievement rates on the Social Services (Children and Young People) MA qualification have been high for the last three years and are 20% higher than the national subject average.
- The number of Lorndale MAs who have declared a disability or who are care-experienced are above national MA averages.

#### **Areas for development**

- The number of apprentices registered on MA programmes who are male or from a minority ethnic background are currently below national MA averages.

## 5. Main points for action

There are no main points for action.

## 6. Examples of highly effective practice

HM Inspectors have identified one example of highly effective practice. Lorndale's approach to candidate support and development is key to candidate success. They ensure that all staff work hard to meet the individual needs of all of their MA candidates. Staff create very strong relationships with each candidate and take care to consider their personal and professional needs very effectively when planning for their training and assessment. This ensures that all assessors, staff and candidates build trust and confidence and is supporting very high rates of apprentice achievement.

## 7. What happens next?

HM Inspectors are confident that the provider has the capacity to continue to improve and HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the provider as a result of this review.

**Joe Mulholland**  
**HM Inspector**

## Appendix 1 Grades used in reporting

A common grading scale is used in making judgements for provider reviews:

- Grade 1 EXCELLENT – Outstanding and sector leading
- Grade 2 VERY GOOD – Major strengths
- Grade 3 GOOD – Important strengths with some areas for improvement
- Grade 4 SATISFACTORY - Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Grade 5 WEAK – Important weaknesses
- Grade 6 UNSATISFACTORY – Major weaknesses

### Summary

- An evaluation of **excellent** applies to training which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellent* represents an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high-levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
- An evaluation of **very good** applies to training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of *very good* represents a high standard of training, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide training without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the provider will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of **good** applies to training characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* represents a standard of training in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the provider should seek to improve further the areas of important strength but take action to address the areas for improvement.
- An evaluation of **satisfactory** applies to training characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *satisfactory* indicates that apprentices' have access to a basic level of training. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the provider should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of **weak** applies to training which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish apprentices' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the provider.
- An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in training, requiring immediate remedial action. The training experience for apprentices is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for training evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the provider.



## Appendix 2 Evaluative Terms

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.