

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by

Genius People

A report by HM Inspectors

06/05/2025

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| Director | Jennifer McEwan |
| External review date | March 2025 |
| Managing Agent | Genius People |
| Lead HMI | Karen Stevenson |
| Apprentice numbers | 541 |

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. The team met with staff, learners and other stakeholders. Discussions focussed on the quality of training delivery, how well the needs of apprentices are met and the approaches to improving the quality of provision.

This review includes the evaluation of the quality of the provision where the provider sub-contracts delivery of the aspects of the apprenticeship programme to other external providers. The review was undertaken over two phases. During phase 1 and 2 of the review, HM Inspectors met with managers and staff, employers and apprentices of Genius People and seven of their 13 apprenticeship delivery subcontractors. This report summarises the findings from the visits, 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. The report will also be published online by Education Scotland.

2. The provider and its context

Genius People employ 22 staff who work with a wide variety of industry sectors including banking, financial services and the public sector to deliver training and qualifications. They support apprenticeship delivery for 39 employers including Wescot, Chase Bank, PRA Group, BPO, Pastdue Credit, Aviva & Arch Insurance, Scottish and Southern Energy, OVO Energy, Dell, David Lloyd and Wheatley.

Genius People deliver apprenticeship programmes in several ways to meet the needs of both employer and apprentices. These include hybrid delivery, remote delivery, and in-person sessions. All are supported through provision of e-learning modules.

HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of training provision and the experiences of apprentices delivered by Genius People and seven of their 13 subcontractors. 14 apprenticeship frameworks were included in this review; Fashion and Textiles Heritage, Freight Logistics, Print Industry Occupations, Signmaking, Data Analytics, Project Management, Digital Applications, Digital Marketing, Digital Technology, IT and Communications, Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing, Pharmacy Services Technical, Electronic Security Systems and Providing Security Officer Services.

3. Outcome of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

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| Leadership and Quality Culture | Very Good |
| Service Delivery | Very Good |
| Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices | Very Good |

4. Summary of review findings

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

4.1 Leadership and Quality Culture – Grade: Very Good

4.1.1 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training.

Areas of positive progress

- Genius People managers ensure all MA programmes are relevant to employers' needs. Through their effective use of employer links, programme content has evolved over time to help meet the recruitment and staffing requirements of the wide range of industries they work with. As a result, programmes support employers by supporting the supply of a skilled workforce.
- Genius People managers conduct informative onboarding sessions for all new subcontractors, ensuring they are fully aware of their responsibilities in successfully managing MA programmes. Each subcontractor is assigned a Genius People staff member to liaise with. They review key performance indicator (KPI) targets and apprentices' progress during quarterly review meetings. Subcontractors feel well informed and supported to meet their obligations set out in the Genius People Service Level Agreement.
- Managers provide monthly tracker reports for subcontractors and employers. These offer helpful insights into apprentice and programme performance against agreed KPI targets. These reports promote transparency and accountability for all stakeholders and support benchmarking of performance against national successful outcome rates.
- Managers hold monthly review meetings with employers and subcontractors. These structured sessions promote clarity and ownership of agreed KPI targets, help drive programme improvements and ensure alignment with business objectives. Where performance is low, subcontractors develop improvement action plans which are reviewed at subsequent meetings.
- A helpful monthly newsletter is distributed to subcontractors and employers. This provides informative content related to programme delivery and highlights wider training opportunities. The newsletter helps to ensure that stakeholders are updated on safeguarding matters, relevant apprenticeship news, whilst providing valuable resources, such as guidance on meta skills delivery. Subcontractors and employers appreciate this resource for staying informed and enhancing their practices.

- Genius People managers host well-attended quarterly meetings with subcontractors, where they share the latest updates from SDS. They provide progress updates on KPIs, highlight any adjustments to induction arrangements, and encourage the sharing of best practice approaches. During these meetings, subcontractors increasingly share their programme management approaches. Subcontractors value these sessions which support them to improve the management of their apprenticeship programmes.
- Managers regularly gather feedback from apprentices, employers and subcontractors to support MA programme evaluation. They receive helpful feedback through completion of surveys and formal review meetings held with subcontractors and employers. Managers make good use of this information to explore strategies to support improvement, for example, the recruitment of apprentices from underrepresented groups.
- Subcontractors submit regular progress review documents to Genius People managers. These highlight issues of concern such as early leavers and identify remedial actions to mitigate risks for future cohorts. Genius People managers meet regularly with subcontractors who have high numbers of early leavers or where apprentices are not meeting agreed milestones. These approaches are appreciated by subcontractors and help bring about performance improvements.
- Genius People managers collate subcontractor external verifier (EV) reports and track subcontractor action plans related to any improvements identified. Subcontractors share progress updates with Genius People managers. These effective quality assurance arrangements help ensure the MA programme meets the required awarding body standards.
- Subcontractors submit completed apprentices' quarterly reviews to Genius People via a helpful online tool. This helpful arrangement supports the successful tracking and monitoring of achievement made against set KPIs required by SDS.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.2 Service Delivery – Grade: Very Good

4.2.1 Delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- Staff in both Genius People and subcontractors deliver high-quality training through a combination of structured learning, workplace mentoring, and assessment strategies. This ensures that apprentices gain the necessary skills and knowledge for their job roles.
- All staff provide apprentices with a wide variety of engaging and effective learning activities that meet their individual learning needs. When apprentices complete their programme ahead of schedule, they are provided with opportunities to enhance their skills further through additional training or completion of optional units. This enhances apprentices' knowledge and skills and contributes to their personal and professional development.
- All subcontractors deliver effective induction sessions for new apprentices joining the programme. This ensures apprentices settle in quickly, develop positive relationships with their assessors and are fully aware of their programme content.

- All assessors work flexibly to create tailored learning plans and share goals with employers. They take good account of apprentices' schedules and collaborate closely with employers to ensure apprentices develop relevant skills, stay on track, and successfully complete their MA programme. Apprentices appreciate the skills and qualifications they attain, confidently discussing how these enhance their job performance and career prospects.
- All assessors provide effective support and foster positive relationships with apprentices which enable them to demonstrate confidently the required occupational knowledge and skills. Assessors tailor their approaches to meet individual apprentice needs, ensuring they develop industry-relevant skills and competencies.
- Genius People assessors effectively incorporate meta skills into their programmes. This helps apprentices develop essential skills and prepare them for the workplace.
- Most apprentices find quarterly progress reviews (QPR) highly beneficial, as they offer structured feedback on their progress, highlight strengths, and identify areas for development. These reviews allow apprentices to set clear learning goals, address challenges proactively, and receive targeted support from assessors and line managers.

Areas for development

- The development of meta skills is not embedded consistently across all frameworks, particularly in subcontracted delivery. Genius People assessors are currently supporting subcontractor staff to build their capacity and integrate meta skills into their programmes. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these arrangements.

4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training

Areas of positive progress

- Internal verifiers hold formal standardisation meetings with assessors to discuss their assessment methods and techniques that support apprentice success. These meetings provide a platform for sharing best practice approaches, exchanging ideas, and ensures alignment with industry and qualification standards.
- Subcontractor assessors attend planned Genius People events, where staff with knowledge of specific frameworks share insights and best practices. This event helps assessors stay up to date with industry standards, refine their assessment techniques, and share best practice. It also fosters collaboration and professional development, contributing to continuous programme improvement.

Areas for development

- A few subcontractor managers do not review sufficiently well the quality of training programme delivery to support improvement.

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

- Almost all providers make good use of digital portfolios which offer multi-stakeholder access, providing real-time information to track and monitor apprentices' progress. This ensures

employers, assessors, and apprentices stay informed about achievements and can discuss and agree individual needs.

- All apprentices participate actively in induction arrangements, arranged collaboratively between Genius People and subcontractors' staff. This prepares apprentices effectively for their programme and what is required to complete the award.
- Apprentices value the positive relationships between their trainer/assessors and employers. All apprentices report that they are supported well during their apprenticeship. They know who to contact should they have work related issues or need to raise personal concerns.
- Almost all assessors track apprentice achievements efficiently using an online portfolio. This supports progress monitoring well and reduces delays and data inaccuracies. Apprentices and their employers have access to the tracker, allowing them to monitor effectively overall progress and achievements.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance

Areas of positive progress

- Genius People managers review annually, each subcontractor's safeguarding policy to ensure it remains current and effective. Subcontractors submit a safeguarding action plan which provides them with helpful advice and guidance, promotes awareness of responsibilities, and signposts helpful resources.
- Genius People managers oversee safeguarding referral arrangements for subcontractors, providing a secure email address for all stakeholders. This supports subcontractors in managing their safeguarding responsibilities. Additionally, this information enhances Genius People managers' awareness of current issues, leading to better resource sharing and training for stakeholders.
- All Genius People staff complete mandatory safeguarding training annually and attend quarterly updates aligned with national safeguarding developments. Subcontractors attend these quarterly updates which provide a useful platform for evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding training, assessing its impact on practices, and driving continuous improvement.
- All apprentices complete an induction programme which includes a talking heads video on safeguarding, the PREVENT duty, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and mental health awareness. These arrangements empower apprentices to seek help when needed, promoting their wellbeing and encouraging a culture of openness and trust.
- Genius People managers meet quarterly with sub-contractor staff to review safeguarding action plans. Discussions are often themed, for example, apprentices who are under 18 years of age, or adults identified as vulnerable or who may be high risk. The outcomes from these meetings are recorded and made available for all relevant staff to access. These arrangements result in a more coordinated and proactive approach to safeguarding, providing opportunities for timely intervention when required.

- Genius People managers provide apprentices with a diverse range of valuable resources from external agencies including Hub of Hope, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and Action for Children (ACT). These resources are distributed to apprentices through various methods, ensuring accessibility for all.
- All subcontractor managers host annual professional development reviews with staff, which help identify appropriate opportunities for further training aligned with legislation and industry standards. This ensures all staff are kept up-to-date and adhere to regulatory organisation requirements.
- All staff have a good understanding of health and safety policies and procedures. They ensure these are complied with and adopt safe working practices. All apprentices understand their roles in relation to health and safety practices and these are reinforced well by assessors during one-to-one sessions and progress reviews.
- All assessors and verifiers have a thorough understanding of equality and diversity procedures and policies. They highlight these effectively during induction and proactively promote them as part of the MA programme.

Areas for development

- A few staff who are required to do so, are not yet members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme.

4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- The overall apprenticeship achievement rates for the 16-19 age group is 4.8% above the national average for this cohort.
- Achievement rates for MA programmes including Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing, Business and Administration, Customer Service, Pharmacy Services Technical Apprenticeship and Glass Industry Occupations are significantly higher than the national benchmark.
- Genius People staff are committed to widening access and creating an inclusive learning environment. The number of apprentices from diverse ethnic backgrounds is above the national average.
- MA programmes are accessible and delivered flexibly for all apprentices and their employers. Most apprentices attain their qualification and stay with their current employer. Workplace mentoring and structured learning pathways help develop key skills including communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Career progression and higher-level qualifications are promoted well by almost all providers.

Areas for development

- The overall rate of apprentice achievement is below the national benchmark.
- The overall rate of achievement for the 20+ age group is below the national benchmark for this cohort.

5. Main points for action

The following main points for action are required:

- Genius People managers should continue to improve overall achievement rates for those MA frameworks where they are low.
- Genius People managers should ensure that all staff who require to do so become members of the PVG scheme.

6. Examples of highly effective practice

None identified.

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.

Karen Stevenson
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:

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| 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.