

The Autism Project – CareTrade

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

30 January–1 February 2018

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, managers have not identified areas for improvement accurately.
- Staff have not implemented suitable arrangements to record the progress that learners make relative to their prior attainment.
- Project staff do not provide work placement supervisors with individual risk assessments or support plans, so that they know what adjustments are most effective in providing support to the students.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not at a consistently high level.
- The implementation of the safeguarding and equality and diversity policies was too slow, so students received information late.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and trustees have worked well together to develop a model of provision that works very well in preparing students for employment.
- The high-quality work placements and the skilled job coaches offer students an inclusive and supportive environment in which to prepare for employment.
- Students develop work skills well in their work placements and in employability lessons.
- Students develop in confidence and resilience because they travel to work placements independently and negotiate their way round the complex hospital environments.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Autism Project is part of the CareTrade Charitable Trust, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, based in Southwark, London. CareTrade has run employment-based provision since 2010, and The Autism Project was developed from that provision. The Autism Project became listed as an approved provider in August 2016. It offers day provision for young people with autism aged between 18 and 25. The breadth of previous educational attainment of students on entry is very wide, ranging from experience of higher education to entry level. Students are in work placements four days a week, with one day in class.
- All of the students follow a preparation for employment programme, which includes functional skills, where required, and employability. Second-year students also attend a job club. The work placements are mostly in local hospitals. The project receives students on placements funded by eight local authorities, and all students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. At the time of inspection, The Autism Project had 12 students, of whom 10 were male and two were female.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop an action plan to make sure that the safeguarding and equality and diversity policies are implemented fully from an early stage of the programme.
- Rectify the shortcomings in the quality arrangements by:
 - developing consistent criteria for observations of teaching and learning and for monitoring the provision in the workplace
 - focusing in the self-assessment report on the impact of actions taken so that judgements are accurate and recommendations provide a sound basis for future action.
- Capture the progress of students from their starting points by making sure that staff record fully the initial information about students' experience and attainment, and that at progress reviews they record what students have achieved from the beginning of the programme.
- Make sure that the employer receives an individual risk assessment for each student, which identifies the support needed, including support plans, and any adjustments that may be required. Provide employers with support plans where required.
- Raise the standard of all teaching by intervening early and providing support to staff where required.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not implemented sufficiently rigorous quality assurance arrangements. Some are in the early stages of development. The new staff appraisal system has only been in place for three months, so has not yet had any discernible impact on performance. The arrangements for the capturing of students' progress from the starting points are not yet effective. The self-assessment report is too descriptive, with too few specific areas for improvement identified. Leaders and managers do not have a complete picture of the quality of the provision and have not graded it accurately.
- Leaders and managers have yet to develop their own teaching and learning observation criteria so that they can monitor and evaluate the quality of classroom teaching and learning. Observations of teaching this year have been carried out by different external observers, including a trustee, and lack consistency of criteria. Managers had not carried out a full observation of a new teacher by the time of inspection.
- Managers have not put in place arrangements for the monitoring practice in the workplace. This aspect is at the core of the project's work because students spend four days a week in placements. The team meets frequently to discuss the students and to identify any areas of concern, but managers do not carry out any formal observations of the work of the job coaches so that they can evaluate the quality and make any improvements that may be required.
- Leaders and trustees have developed a very clear vision for the project, predicated on an understanding of the advantages of sustained work experience for their specific student cohort. Their approach to supported internships provides meaningful work experience for their cohort of students, who are over 18 and ready for a preparation for employment programme. The leaders acknowledge that the provision is in the early stages of development and that the arrangements for quality improvement require further development.
- Leaders have developed very positive partnerships over the past seven years, including regular meetings and dialogue with the head of equality and diversity at the National Health Service local hospitals trust and with two local authorities. These partnerships have resulted in the expansion of work experience opportunities.
- The curriculum matches the needs of the student cohort very well, with a core of work experience in a real work situation, augmented by a day of classroom teaching. The lessons include employability and functional skills for those students who have not achieved a level 2 qualification. The approach to the curriculum enshrines the four themes of preparing for adulthood, with a focus on greater independence. Each job coach provides support to six students, reflecting the levels of independence of the students. The leaders use the funding well to support the students, in line with the expectations in the students' EHC plans.

The governance of the provider

- The small group of trustees bring a wealth of experience and relevant expertise, and are about to increase the number of trustees to widen their reach. Trustees recognise the

need to appoint a qualified and experienced head of education as the number of students increases. They are enthusiastic, ambitious for the project and work well with the management team to develop the provision.

- The trustees have overseen the development of the provision from its inception and their involvement includes visits to the project. One trustee, headteacher of a special school, chairs the education advisory panel that focuses on the development of the curriculum. The minutes of the panel's meeting show that the trustees support managers well by providing challenge and keeping a close watch on the developing provision. However, they did not identify the omissions from the students' induction programme.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- During the course of the inspection it emerged that, although leaders had sound policies in place, and significant inputs about safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty were planned for the spring term, the first-year students had not had an effective induction to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, or equality and diversity. In order to rectify the failure to include these topics at induction, the staff informed all the students of the arrangements, before the inspection finished, and identified clearly how they would be reinforcing the issues in subsequent weeks.
- The project staff are all trained to the appropriate level, as are the trustees. The single central register is up to date, with staff appropriately checked. The students' workplaces, where they spend four days a week, provide inclusive environments where students are safe and all hospital staff are thoroughly trained and updated in these policies. The students in the second year had significant input in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and British values in the second and third terms of their first year.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of classroom teaching is not consistently good enough. In the less effective provision, staff do not use activities that meet the individual needs and abilities of students well enough. Teachers do not always provide clear instructions, or give sufficient clarification and explanation of key terminology. They set tasks that are too complicated for students to complete without significant amounts of support, so little learning takes place. In better lessons, teaching staff plan well to match the individual needs of the students, who make good progress in lessons. Teaching staff use aspects of work well as a vehicle to develop writing skills and encourage students to engage well with text.
- The termly reviews of progress in the workplace are not sufficiently detailed. The job coaches focus too much on the job tasks covered, with insufficient information about what the student can now do, the skills they have gained and the extent to which students completed tasks independently. The employer's contribution to the review is brief. The reviews do not provide sufficient information about the extent to which students have progressed in relation to their starting points, and do not provide a comprehensive picture of achievements.
- Job coaches promote diversity in the way they themselves work, and encourage the students to respect others and acknowledge differences. Students learn to communicate

and work with people from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating well their developing social skills, for example when greeting visitors or conversing with hospital staff.

- Job coaches source high-quality work placements for the students, mostly in two local hospitals. The work placements are a significant strength of the provision. Project staff have grown and developed these placements over many years, and the hospital staff provide an inclusive environment in which the students are welcomed and supported. The students undertake the hospital staff induction programme and the hospital staff appraise their performance. This means that students benefit from experiences of employment in a positive setting, where the staff have a good understanding of equality and where students are safe.
- Job coaches each support six students. They arrange work placement opportunities that match students' interests and abilities well, and most are for four days a week. Administrative work ranges from high-level data work, to routine administrative tasks following instructions. Students who prefer more practical tasks can work in catering or housekeeping at different levels. In most of the placements, the hospital staff found the students' help invaluable. One student working on data was using his higher level of skill to assist other members of staff. All the students have the opportunity to improve their social communication skills on a daily basis, and thereby be better prepared for employment.
- Project staff make good use of the information in the EHC plans to help plan the work placements. Most students have had multiple previous experiences of work placements while studying in college or school, but these have mostly been short term, particularly when students were studying on programmes at levels 2 or 3. Project staff carry out their own initial assessments of students, establishing the levels of English and maths. Nine of the students have not previously achieved a level 2 in these subjects.
- The small team of teaching staff and job coaches are well qualified and most have had significant previous specialist experience, including in autism. This means that job coaches understand the barriers that students with autism may experience, and discuss the support needs of students with the employers on an individual basis. They intervene where necessary, sometimes changing work placements where students find the situation overwhelming.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Individual risk assessments for students in the workplace require further development. The project team carries out very thorough generic health and safety risk assessments in relation to the settings in the workplace, but they do not provide the employers with a risk assessment in relation to individual students in that setting, identifying strategies or interventions to support students, if necessary. The project staff discuss these issues with individual employers and mentors, but this is not sufficient in all circumstances, such as when supervisory staff are absent.
- Project staff do not provide sufficiently independent careers advice. Students do not have the opportunity for an individual interview with an external specialist careers adviser. Students experience three or more different job roles while on the programme and are encouraged to attend careers fairs. In the second year, students attend a job club once a week. This experience provides a meaningful basis for meeting a specialist careers

adviser.

- Students say they feel safe, but the project team has been slow to inform them sufficiently about the project's own safeguarding arrangements.
- Students become more confident in their work placements, not only in relation to work skills but also in becoming more independent. They have to find their way to the work placement site and, for the small number of students who could not previously travel independently, this has resulted in achieving one of their long-term goals. They learn to negotiate their way around the complex work placement sites to find different departments, use the catering facilities and make decisions about what to buy. As a result, students become more resilient and less reliant on others.
- Students attend their placements well and are punctual. The work placement staff have high expectations about attendance and punctuality, and have an agreement with students that these, together with respectful behaviour, are key requirements. Students attend well both in the work placements and at the project's centre for one day a week.
- Project staff prepare students well for their next steps. Students all take an employability qualification to help with preparation for employment, and study for functional skills qualifications if required. Students use information and communication technology facilities during lessons and have access to specialist software. In their second year, the students spend time in a weekly job club as part of their planning for transition to employment. The project team also arranges mock interviews with employers from partner organisations to prepare students for a situation that many find particularly challenging.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The arrangements for measuring students' progress from their starting points are weak. The termly evaluations are too descriptive, and so provide insufficient information about the skills that individual students have developed in the workplace. They do not refer back to the starting point or indicate how much progress students are making in meeting their long-term goals.
- Of the four students who left in 2016/17, one progressed to further education, one to an apprenticeship, one to open employment and one continues to look for work. It is too soon to evaluate the overall success of the programme in preparing students for employment because too few students have completed the programme.
- All students who entered for an employability qualification in 2016/17 achieved it. Teachers use the programme well as a means for students to understand wider aspects of employment.
- No student has yet been entered for a functional skills qualification. The provision was introduced in September 2017.
- Managers monitor the achievements and types of work placement by equalities categories to make sure that all students have the same opportunities and are achieving. No gaps have been found.
- Students develop good technical and work skills and managers are very satisfied with the accuracy of work of many students, particularly in areas such as data inputting, where

accuracy is essential. Employers value the contributions that students make to the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	143526
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	18 to 25
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	8
Principal/CEO	Karen Edwards
Telephone number	0203 375 6288
Website	www.care-trade.org

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)		10		2				
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16								
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	12							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the interim education coordinator as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and reviewed extensive documentation, including EHC plans. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Joyce Deere, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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