



Department
for Education

DfE Investigation Outcome report

Provider: Woodspeen Training Limited

Background

In October 2024 the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) began investigating concerns relating to apprenticeship funding claimed by and paid to Woodspeen Training Limited (Woodspeen or “the provider”). The ESFA became part of the Department for Education (DfE / “the department”) in April 2025, with DfE continuing the investigation from this time. The concerns involved:

- The accuracy of data submitted to DfE in order to claim apprenticeships funding,
- The provider’s delivery capacity,
- Compliance with contract and funding rule requirements,
- Apprentices continuing significantly beyond their planned end dates, and
- The provider’s learning support claims, withdrawals and breaks in learning.

At the time of publication of this report, Woodspeen was subject to creditors’ voluntary liquidation proceedings.

Outcomes of the investigation

The investigation found that:

- Some records required to support funding claims did not comply with the apprenticeship contracts and funding rules.
- Some data submitted by the provider to the Department was inaccurate.
- Some apprentices recorded as continuing beyond their planned end dates had material periods where no training was delivered. This led to overclaims of funding.

The Department identified the following breaches of apprenticeships funding rules and contracts:

Framework	Breach	Issue
Apprenticeship funding rules: 2022 to 2023 2023 to 2024 2024 to 2025	P267 to P269 (Including flow chart on page 98) for 2022 to 2023. P264.2 and P318 to P320 for 2022 to 2023. 230 to 234 for 2023 to 2024. 247 to 251 for 2024 to 2025.	Non-compliant use of breaks in learning led to inaccurate data submissions to the Department.
Procured non levy apprenticeship contract version 25. ESFA apprenticeship agreement October 2024 version 8.	Schedule 6 – 3.1.5. Schedule 2 – 3.1.5.	A review of data submitted to the Department by the provider showed that some apprentices were recorded as being on a break in learning of between a year and over 4 years in duration. Apprentices not being in learning for extended periods amounted to them being unengaged with the programme.
Apprenticeship funding rules: 2022 to 2023	P360 and P361 for 2022 to 2023.	Inaccurate data submissions in relation to start and end dates of learning for some apprentices.
Apprenticeship funding rules: 2022 to 2023 2023 to 2024 2024 to 2025	P78 to P87 and P344 for 2022 to 2023. Page 20 Evidence requirements for both 2023 to 2024 and 2024-25.	Learning support was claimed by the provider without the required supporting evidence. Identified necessary reasonable adjustments were not evidenced. Evidence packs did not include a plan for reasonable adjustment delivery, or any record of actual delivery of adjustments, or of any associated costs.

Framework	Breach	Issue
Apprenticeship funding rules: 2024 to 2025	P287 to P289	DfE obtained email evidence showing Woodspeen staff coordinating the production of delivery evidence for one apprentice. Records were updated to include a meeting and progress report for September, despite the provider confirming that the last meeting with the apprentice took place in June. As a result, the provider overclaimed three monthly payments for delivery relating to this apprentice.
Apprenticeship agreements from 2020 to 2025. Procured non levy apprenticeship contract (version 9, signed 13 September 2019 and all subsequent contract versions). Also: Provider guide to delivering high-quality apprenticeships	Paragraphs 2.4 and 11.2 in January 2020 Version 4. Paragraphs 2.6 and 23.8 in March 2020 Version 1 to version 8 as terminated in 2025. Paragraphs 4.4, 17.16 and 18.26.6.	Forty apprentices were recorded in data submissions to the Department as continuing significantly beyond their planned end dates. The investigation established that these apprentices had material periods where no apprenticeship training was delivered. Funding had been overclaimed during the periods of programme inactivity.

Action

The Department for Education identified apprenticeships funding overpayments of £189,527.08 paid across the 2021-22 to 2025-26 academic years. These funds have been recovered in full.

Prevention

On concluding the investigation, the DfE undertook a prevention analysis exercise to establish what could have been done to prevent the breaches that were identified by the investigation.

Issue	Prevention
Extended duration breaks in learning amounting to apprentices being disengaged with the programme.	Providers should maintain regular contact with all apprentices; restarting or withdrawing learners as appropriate to their circumstances.
Inaccurate data submissions in relation to the start and end dates of learning for some apprentices.	Providers should correct funding overclaims promptly on discovery in their next data return (in this instance, by entering actual end date for the apprentice, and reporting them as withdrawn). The Department's funding processes would then rectify the overclaimed funding. Evidence should reflect programme delivery. Providers should ensure consistency between the actual delivery to apprentices, the evidence of delivery and the data returns submitted to DfE.
Learning support funding claims were not supported by required evidence.	Providers should have detailed and up to date knowledge of how to deliver and administer learning support, including evidential requirements. Providers should ensure learning support data returns made to DfE comply with contract and funding rules requirements.

Issue	Prevention
Apprentices continuing significantly beyond their planned end dates had material periods of inactivity consistent with programme non-delivery / non-engagement.	Providers should complete apprentices' qualifications on or before the agreed planned end date. Providers should ensure that apprentices are engaged and receiving delivery while continuing on the programme. Apprentices not receiving programme delivery for material periods should be withdrawn or placed on a break in learning.
General Cross-Cutting Issue.	Providers should have effective oversight and controls including checks / audit to ensure that all data submitted to the DfE is accurate and supported by compliant documents and records. DfE have published the Financial handbook for independent training providers to support providers to strengthen controls and develop effective governance arrangements.