

Self-Assessment Report

August 2019 – July 2020



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Background

Juniper Training Limited (Juniper) formerly known as Carver Training was established in 1983 as a youth training centre for warehouse training. It now offers Study Programme, Traineeships (adult & youth) and Apprenticeships.

This self-assessment report will examine the period August 2019 – July 2020 for all programmes.

2019/20 starts:

Programme	Number of starts in 2019/20	Comparison to 2018/19
Study Programme	1264	Decrease of 295 learners
Traineeships (16-18 year olds)	52	Decrease of 54 learners
Traineeships (19-24 year olds)	75	Decrease of 29 learners
Apprenticeships	99 Level 2 160 Level 3 19 Level 4	Decrease of 31 learners Increase of 72 learners Increase of 19 learners

This report will examine the position of Juniper at the start of the contact year in August 2019 and the analysis will scrutinise the impact of changes and measure improvements made across the whole academic year. The report this year takes into account the impact of Covid and will consider the position prior to lockdown and from March 2020 onwards.

Juniper operates from 11 centres and 4 hubs across the West Midlands (Brierley Hill, Lichfield, Walsall, Wednesbury & Wolverhampton), East Midlands (Chesterfield, Derby and Leicester), Shropshire (Telford and Shrewsbury), Staffordshire (Hanley, Leek & Burton) and Cheshire (Stockport & Ashton). Central Support Services (Head Office) is located in Featherstone, Wolverhampton. All centres and hubs are based in areas of high social deprivation.

Maths prior attainment levels of learners when they started programme during 2019/20 were low.

9-4 (or equivalent)	3-1 (or equivalent)	No prior attainment	No data
19%	48%	21%	12%

English prior attainment levels of learners when they started on programme during 2019/20 were low.

9-4 (or equivalent)	3-1 (or equivalent)	No prior attainment	No data
23%	46%	19%	12%

41% of learners on Study Programme during 2019/20 were identified as having Special Educational Needs or a Disability (SEND); an increase of 1% compared to the previous year. The top 5 categories for SEND were: mental health 10%, other medical condition 9%, dyslexia 8%, social & emotional difficulties 5% and autism spectrum disorder 3%.

Of those learners on Study Programme during 2019/20, **42% of learners were assessed as eligible for bursary funding (vulnerable and discretionary)** to support with costs associated with their training, such as travel, clothing, equipment, educational visits and books. This is a decrease of 1% when compared to 2018/19. **80% of all learners in receipt of vulnerable bursary were made up of those learners that were**

either in care or care leavers. A full breakdown of numbers can be seen in the Free Meals and Bursary funding table:

Free Meals and Bursary Funding table based on 2019/20 starts*:

In receipt of:	Percentage	Number
Free Meals Funding	16%	224
16-19 Discretionary Bursary	32%	447
16-19 Vulnerable Bursary	7%	96
In care/care leavers in receipt of 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary	80%	52

* Study Programme, 16-19 & Adult Traineeship

Juniper employs almost 200 staff. The Management Board consists of the Chairman (no operational day-to-day involvement), the Managing Director, the Head of Operations, two Regional Heads of Performance, the Business Development Manager and the Head of Quality. They are responsible for all aspects of the company’s day-to-day management, and are supported by Performance Managers at a centre level. Effective governance arrangements are in place; the AELP Code of Good Governance for Independent Learning Providers has been adopted and the performance and effectiveness of Juniper’s governance is assessed against the framework. The governors (chairman Richard Holt, non-executive governor David Shouesmith and external specialist Jason Lancaster) provide impartial scrutiny and challenge in governance board meetings. Training is funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Description of Programmes

Juniper offers full-time and part-time study programmes from entry level to level 2, which include maths and English, employability skills, personal social development and work experience. The programmes aim to equip learners with the necessary, skills, knowledge and behaviours to obtain a positive destination to an apprenticeship, further education course at a higher level or job with training. The programmes are individualised to meet the needs of learners and offer access to a wide range of vocational sectors. Work experience placements are personalised and based upon the needs and interests of learners; they are broad ranging and not limited to specific sector areas. Full-time study programmes consist typically of 550 guided learning hours per learner per year, over a 30-week period. In 2019/20, Juniper offered vocational pathways in Childcare, Business Administration, Customer Service and Construction.

Traineeships will last anything from six weeks to a maximum of six months with the content tailored to the needs of the individual student. The core element includes work preparation training (ensuring young people/adults are ready and have the confidence to take the first step in their career) and a continuation of English and maths study (if they do not hold a grade 9-4 in GCSE). In addition to this, trainees complete a high quality work experience placement in their occupational area of interest, providing insight and experience of the world of work and a progression route, preferably an apprenticeship. Adult Education is offered via the 19+ Traineeship Route.

Juniper offers level 2 to level 5 apprenticeships in the following sector areas through frameworks or the new standards: Business, Administration and Law; Construction, Planning and Built Environment; Education and Training; Health, Public Services and Care and Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Processes

Juniper Training was last inspected by Ofsted in July 2017 and was judged to be good. The self-assessment process underpins Juniper’s quality assurance processes. In compiling the annual self-assessment report, all staff and a proportion of learners and employers have been involved in reviewing and reporting on the quality of provision within their centre. The Head of Quality is responsible for overseeing this process. Performance Managers initiated the quality assurance process within their centres to collate and agree centre self-assessment judgements and grading. Centre Improvement Plans are produced based on the initial findings from the self-assessment process and added to throughout the academic year to strive for continual improvement. The process strives to be robust and accurate and uses centrally collated and confirmed data provided by Juniper’s own Management Information and data from software such as PICS to inform judgements. Additional data and evidence from provision reviews, student focus groups, observations of key learning processes and external quality assurance reports were also used.

The self-assessment report uses the criteria as set out in the Education Inspection Framework (2019). Provision is graded according to EIF descriptors as follows:-

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Juniper Self-Assessment Grades

SAR Grades August 2019 – July 2020	Grade
Overall Effectiveness	2
Effectiveness of Quality of Education	2
Behaviour and Attitudes	2
Personal Development	2
Leadership and Management	2
Education Programmes for Young People	2
Adult Learning Programmes	3
Apprenticeships	2
High Needs	2

Effectiveness of Quality of Education

Strengths

Leaders provide a varied curriculum for Study Programme, Traineeship & Apprenticeship learners, which develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners need to prepare them for their next stage in education, training or employment.

Senior leaders and managers continue to maintain and grow strategic links with employers and are aligning these to the provision. The introduction of the new construction (roofing) apprenticeship provision and the health and social care study programme pathway to meet learner/local needs, along with the refinement of specific vocational pathways in 2019/20 has broadened opportunities for learners, as well as providing clear progression routes. Juniper has developed a new partnership delivery arrangement with Rydale roofing in Stoke; and through our liaisons with the Midlands Roof Training Group and our prominent profile, have so far signed up 15 employers to offer apprenticeships within the roofing industry in this local area.

The employer engagement team is well established. Leaders and managers have examined LMI information to identify sector areas and the Business Development Manager and her team are developing strategic partnerships linked to these. Some examples include: partnership working with the Black Country Chamber of Commerce to raise the profile of apprenticeships with employers, identify gaps in local provision and to inform content of delivery within our curriculum areas; Juniper has developed strong partnership working with local councils and we are preferred apprenticeship providers for these: Solihull, Sandwell, Walsall and Telford and Wrekin. As part of future strategic development, the Business Development Executive is working with Chesterfield local authority and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce to develop an employability offer within the government's Kickstart scheme and we have tendered to become a partner of Staffordshire LEP, to work alongside employers to carry out organisational needs analysis and develop provision tailored to their businesses where shortages exist.

Up until the country entered lockdown in March 2020, centres continued to source higher numbers of work experience and progression providing learners with opportunities that are more closely aligned to local and regional priorities. In response to employer feedback, we have refined the content of roofing provision for apprenticeships and study programme, developed our childcare and Traineeship pathway and introduced a new health and social care pathway to advance our provision offer.

Leaders seek the views of employers and learners to provide education and skills training aligned to these needs. For example, Juniper has developed a new partnership with a roofing company – Rydale – based in Stoke and has developed a construction training study programme in response to the skills shortage identified in this area. Leading on from this apprenticeships in roofing and cladding were introduced in March 2020 for Juniper's Building Futures provision in Walsall. The Employer Engagement Manager has worked closely with a range of employers to respond to their needs and Juniper expanded its apprenticeship offer to include L5 Children, Young People & Families Manager, L5 HR Consultant, L3 Learning Mentor and L4 Assessor Coach. The early years offer continues to grow, with a year on year increase in both study programme learner and apprentice enrolments, in response to the local labour market and employers such as Walsall Council.

Post-March 2020, leaders adapted the curriculum to respond to government restrictions taking into account learner and employer needs. Examples of this include the effective use of time to front-load off the job technical training, adapting to the business needs of those apprentices working in essential key worker roles, supporting employers to understand government schemes and financial support packages; as well as their responsibilities towards their employees and in a small minority of instances, apprentices were able to accelerate their learning through effective use of their time whilst on furlough.

The large majority of learners develop substantial knowledge, skills and especially behaviours that prepare them well to have the confidence and ability to progress positively to work, apprenticeships and further learning.

Learners report in feedback surveys and focus groups that Juniper is helping them to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for their next step. Employers substantiate this; 97% reported that Juniper is helping learners to prepare for the world of work when they start their placement and 92% would consider offering learners a job or apprenticeship at the end of their programme (Employer Survey Feedback – December 2020).

The curriculum addresses social disadvantage as it provides opportunities for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to access education; the large majority of learners progress to a positive destination upon completion of their programme.

Juniper's training centres are located in areas of high deprivation. Leaders, managers and staff provide inclusive opportunities for learners, many of whom have previously had a poor experience of education, to engage in education and training. They provide wrap around support and assist learners that have barriers and a lack of external support to gain a positive learning experience.

As a result, the large majority of learners were on track to achieve their learning goals and progress to a positive destination pre-lockdown (as evidenced by the same achievement rate in Feb for the last 3 years). However, the inability to carry out teacher assessments, due to learners not being on programme for long enough at the point they were assessed; or the lack of opportunity to assess a minority of qualifications using these methods for example, childcare, resulted in lower achievement rates than in recent years. The capacity to provide a better quality of remote education, including remote invigilation and assessment has increased significantly for the 20/21 academic year.

In response to the needs of employers and learners, leaders have introduced and refined new vocational curriculum offers and new apprenticeship pathways in 2019/20. These clearly outline what learners should know and be able to do by the end of their programme.

Juniper has introduced new study programme pathways in health and social care and has refined the childcare, construction and traineeship pathways. The apprenticeship offer has been expanded to include construction (roofing), L5 Children, Young People & Families Manager, L5 HR Consultant, L3 Learning Mentor and L4 Assessor Coach. Knowledge, skills and behaviours development is at the core of successful learning and progression, Juniper recognises this and staff work hard to ensure that learners develop the vital skills and behaviours to enable them to achieve.

The well-developed roll-on/roll-off programmes enable learners to access effective training flexibly and to meet their needs that enables them to rapidly develop their skills, knowledge, behaviours and confidence to progress into further work and education.

Many study programme and traineeship learners have previously attended college and other education institutions but report a lack of support to enable completion of their programmes. Juniper's study programmes and traineeships have monthly intakes allowing NEET learners to access education to continue their learning journey without having to wait until the start of the next academic year, significantly reducing the risk of learners becoming disengaged and demotivated.

Learners recognise the value of the curriculum they are taught and understand how skills and knowledge are transferable to different sector areas. Leaders and teachers have ensured that there is a strong focus, and opportunities are provided within each curriculum area, for learners to develop their skills and knowledge in broader areas including work readiness and life experience.

Learners benefit from a range of non-qualification activity including reviews, opportunities to develop their personal and employability skills to gain knowledge and understanding aside from the technical and vocational skills that they are developing. Learners on study programme mature through the programme and the opportunities they have through work experience in particular, enable them to appreciate employer expectations and how to communicate better in the adult world.

Since March 2020, Juniper have planned alternative activities in place of work placements to ensure that learners are still able gain knowledge and understanding of the world of work, whilst there are restrictions on work experience. These include investing in new technology such as online CPD e-learning modules through The Skills Network and alternative in-house employability training for learners on traineeships. Through the periods of the year where restrictions have eased, Juniper have swiftly and safely supported learners to return to their work placements enabling them to continue with this invaluable learning experience

Learners including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with SEND, benefit from high technical and vocational ambitions. Leaders and teachers promote high expectations for achievement and progress of all learners and have robust systems in place to monitor this.

Leaders and teachers ensure a positive and inclusive culture is in place that is based upon high expectations. Centre managers and staff monitor progress of vulnerable learners through the monthly ILR report and apply interventions to assist them to get back on track. At a company level, leaders monitor the achievement of different groups to reduce disparity and as a result, there are no significant disparities in the overall achievement and progression of the varying groups of learners. The small minority of learners who do not achieve and progress, staff work hard to enable these learners to access external services and signpost them to alternative provision for more specialist support.

Teachers have good subject expertise and skills to deliver high quality education to young people and apprentices. The few underperforming teachers are well supported to develop their subject expertise and practice.

Leaders put good support in place for new staff and ensure that their progress is monitored in monthly reviews. Where managers identify that new or underperforming staff member requires additional support, the training team, supported by lead practitioners and sector leads work closely with them to develop their practice. Staff benefit from wide-ranging opportunities to develop through regular and targeted CPD activities, including qualifications, training courses, industry days, company training days, standardisation meetings and shadowing opportunities. The introduction and use of new learning technologies has accelerated the pace of, and enabled increased capacity to provide short bursts of intensive support. Staff in particular value the support they have received to develop their use of Microsoft 365, Teams, Zoom and Smart Assessor and learners have benefited from their increased confidence in using such systems and interactive platforms.

In the large majority of classes, teachers deliver valuable, well-planned lessons that enable learners to understand key concepts. In these lessons, teachers present information clearly and promote good discussion and debate in order for learners to further develop their knowledge and skills.

Learners enjoy their learning and benefit from wide-ranging opportunities to understand key concepts. 97% of study programme learners and 93% of apprentices report that they would recommend Juniper to a friend and most learners recognise how their lessons are enabling them to build their vocational skills and knowledge as well and improve their understanding of maths, English and employability (Learner and Apprentice Student Feedback – Dec 20).

Teachers use assessment well to check learners' understanding and provide effective verbal and written feedback that outlines what learners do well and what they need to improve. In a small minority of cases, teachers do not use assessment sufficiently well to inform their future teaching.

Regular feedback and marking of assessments and work help learners to improve their work. Learners are encouraged through positive praise both verbally and written to develop their knowledge and understanding of topics. IQAs and the training and development team support staff to develop their practice in this area and as a result learner feedback improves and is used to inform their teaching.

The curriculum and training team have refined the assessment process to ease administration burdens when assessing remotely. For example, the IQA team have shared best practice on how to work more efficiently to upload and assess portfolio evidence. In VMPP courses, assessment materials have been developed using the advanced features of Teams to develop self-marking assessments which provides tutors with capacity to focus on providing feedback for their 'milestone assessments'. As a result, the quality of feedback that learners receive has improved enabling them to understand better their strengths and development needs.

Teachers ensure that topics are revisited frequently, enabling learners to build and secure skills and knowledge, so that key concepts are embedded in their long term memory.

Teachers provide opportunities for learners to revisit and consolidate their learning through formative assessment methods such as practice assessments, class re-caps and quizzes. Teachers take advantage of the roll on roll off nature of the study programme and traineeship provision to encourage existing learners to explain to new learners, key concepts and previous topics.

In March, qualification outcomes were high in the large majority of centres and aligned with the high performance of previous years. Although the majority of learners achieved their qualifications in 19/20, the pandemic limited opportunities for a minority of learners to achieve their full potential, in particular those who started in the latter stages of the academic year.

Due to the nature of teacher assessments and the process implemented by Ofqual and awarding bodies, staff were unable to carry out teacher assessment for a minority of learners. Examples include: childcare learners on study programme who could not complete the full requirements of the qualification (work experience and paediatric first aid) before they progressed to their next destination. A large cohort of learners who started their study programmes in Dec 19, where staff were unable to carry out valid and reliable assessments to meet awarding body deadlines. This was due to lack of direct teaching/assessment time and the emergency remote learning measures in place, such as learners without technology where work was posted out as an alternative method. A minority of learners were reluctant to pause their progression opportunity or return to take exams at a later date.

The remote education offer has been developed to ensure that learners in the current academic year are not disadvantaged in the same way. Measures are now in place to provide the capacity to complete assessment activities remotely, monitor and track the progress learners are making through virtual platforms and time is there to plan teacher assessments in advance.

Overall achievement for apprentices increased significantly in the 2019/20 academic year and are now above national achievement rates*. A high proportion of apprentices achieve distinctions in their end point assessments.

Overall achievement rates for apprentices were too low in the 2018/19 academic year (46%). Leaders and staff successfully implemented a number of strategies to secure improvements across the board in the 19/20 academic year. Consequently, apprentices and employers benefit from: a more robust initial assessment process; improvements to the curriculum content, driven by the Apprenticeship Contract Manager and Sector Leads. As a result, achievement rates increased significantly (by 23%) and fewer apprentices leave their apprenticeship early. Additionally, a high proportion of learners achieve distinction grades in their end point assessments and 100% of employers recently reported that they could see the development of their apprentice's skills and contribution to their business.

**comparison to the latest available published NARTs data 18/19*

Disadvantaged learners develop their skills and knowledge outperformed when compared to their peers; previous disparities have now been eradicated.

Effective support of learners with SEND through comprehensive individualised support plans that are used well by staff to meet their needs and enable them to grow in confidence and employability skills. At top level, learners with SEND have higher qualification achievement rates and positive progressions than their peers.

Most learners' work effectively demonstrates the development and good progress they are making whilst on programme. In a few classes, learner work does not sufficiently demonstrate development and progress but this is being addressed by managers.

Learners take pride in their work and use feedback from their teachers to carefully correct errors and make amendments to their assignments for qualifications. In those few classes where progress is not demonstrable, teachers are supported to improve their practice.

Good careers education, information, advice and guidance is offered throughout their learning programme and in the large majority of centres learners are being well-prepared and are ready for their stage of education, training or employment.

Learners appreciate the support they are getting from their teachers and progression co-ordinators to explore career options, obtain work experience and make applications for their next step. 96% of learners report that Juniper is helping to prepare them to obtain a job, apprenticeship or further learning when they complete their programme.

The large majority of learners up until March 20, were positively progressing to appropriate destinations and positive destination rates aligned with the high rates seen in previous years. Overall, the majority of learners progressed positively in the 19/20 academic year but the pandemic limited opportunities for a minority of learners.

The impact of Covid-19 on progression rates for the 2019/20 academic year is evident and as anticipated, there were less opportunities available to learners post-lockdown. This, coupled with Juniper staff being furloughed and the inability to track and monitor progressions with the 'normal' rigour, resulted in a decline in the high progression rates seen in previous year. However, positive progression rates pre-lockdown remained good for study programmes and traineeships and were in line with the previous years' performance.

Areas for Improvement

The achievement rates for adult learners are too low and although strategies have been implemented to address this, it is too early to measure the impact.

The achievement and progression rates for Adults on Traineeships and classroom learning programmes have declined since 2016. In 2018/19, senior leaders made a strategic decision to remove Adult Employability Programmes from Juniper's offer to focus on programmes for young people and apprentices. A standalone Adult Traineeship offer was introduced in three locations at the end of 2019, strategies included: improved initial assessment and screening as part of the recruitment process and a refined curriculum model, taking into account employer and stakeholder feedback. Despite the best efforts of leaders and staff, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the capacity to provide the vital work placement element and as a result the impact of the revised curriculum model cannot be measured. The model has been developed further to deliver front loaded, in-house training remotely and the implementation of this will be monitored closely in the 2020/21 academic year.

For a small minority of learners joining during the academic year, the sequencing of the curriculum is not always sufficiently well developed to enable them to seamlessly join their study programme. However, supportive teachers mostly provide extra help that supports them through this transition.

The roll on, roll off nature of the programme presents the biggest challenge to teachers for study programme and traineeships but the large majority of tutors are adept in ensuring that learners have the best transition and quickly settle into their learning programme.

The initial assessment of apprentices is not consistently used sufficiently well enough to inform teaching.

Better initial assessment is in place but a minority of assessors do not yet use this sufficiently well enough to plan apprentices programme. The apprenticeship manager has taken steps to rectify this and has implemented CPD activities to assist assessment coordinators to improve in this area.

Vocational study programmes require further development to secure improved achievement rates including through strengthened recruitment processes.

The introduction of vocational pathways has provided study programme learners with better options for career development. However, the achievement rates for this academic year require further improvement. Leaders and staff have refined processes in place to ensure that learners are ready to undertake these specific pathways.

At top level, learners from black and minority ethnic groups have parity in overall qualification achievement and progression rates; they have higher GCSE achievement rates than their White British counterparts. However, there are now disparities in achievement for Indian, white and Caribbean and Black African learners

Effectiveness of Behaviour and Attitudes

Strengths

Staff have high expectations for learner behaviour.

Learners are polite, courteous, behave respectfully and have good rapport with teachers, assessment coordinators, employers and visitors. Staff tackle rare instance of poor behaviour swiftly and apply appropriate interventions. Effective communication around the expectations of learner behaviour and conduct takes place even prior to learners starting their programme, conduct and behaviour are then closely monitored throughout the induction period and beyond into the different pathways. Learners, especially those with a poor educational experience previously, are supported well to improve their confidence, communication and self-regulation skills to become more independent learners over the duration of their learning programmes.

Learners are ready to learn and participate fully in their curriculum.

Teachers have developed the motivation of learners and they arrive to training sessions prepared to learn. Outdoor clothing is removed and learners are free from distractions such as food and drink, positive behaviours such as taking notes to capture learning are common place. Learning resources such as stationery and technology are available for learners whilst in centre, this was a significant challenge during the national lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic Learners were supported through postal resources and Smart Assessor whilst an online curriculum was built almost from scratch for study programme learners.

Apprentices were less adversely affected as assessment coordinators had already created a large bank of online resources.

Although some learners initially found it difficult to interact and focus whilst learning online and missed the face to face contact with their peers, staff continued to develop their practice and knowledge of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams and as a result learners are once again thriving and participating fully in their learning.

There is a zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Learners have a good understanding of the signs of bullying and have the confidence to report any such issues to staff. Any reported issues are dealt with swiftly and effectively. A new online code of conduct has been introduced across all provision types to take into account the additional concerns that online learning can cause; learners speak very positively and clearly about the support that they have received to keep themselves safe online. Learners feel safe whilst learning from home, in training centres and whilst attending work experience placements.

Staff know and care about learners.

Staff provide high levels of pastoral support to learners and learners improve their confidence and motivation. Progress of learners is closely monitored and where needed support is put in place to ensure that learners get the help that they need. The very large majority of apprenticeship employers speak positively about the support that their apprentices receive from Juniper. A very high proportion of learners across all provision types are particularly satisfied that they have developed their self-motivation, self-confidence and team working skills as a result of the support that they have received.

Learners develop employability skills that help them to prepare for their next steps.

Learners recognise their strengths and are able to apply their learning in the workplace; employers speak highly about the progress and behaviour of learners and workplace learning is well coordinated.

Areas for Improvement

Learners' attendance and punctuality rates in a few centres is too low.

Too many learners in these centres are not sufficiently challenged to rapidly improve their poor attendance and punctuality for learner attendance to be deemed good. In these centres, strategies employed by staff including: rapid interventions with learners; phone calls and meetings with parents/guardians; and the use of letters have not yet had sufficient impact. Punctuality is inconsistent in a few centres and requires further improvement before it is good. Lateness in a small minority of centres is not sufficiently challenged. Progress against improving the attendance and punctuality was severely impacted by the national lockdown introduced in March 20 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Learner engagement dropped significantly initially but as a result of the tireless efforts of leaders and staff, attendance data has gradually returned to previous levels and staff are continuing their efforts to improve this further. Learners report through forums and surveys that staff are helping them to improve these vital employability skills.

Effectiveness of Personal Development

Strengths

Learners have the opportunity to access a broad curriculum that extends beyond the technical and vocational elements of qualifications.

Leaders and managers have constructed a highly aspirational curriculum that gives learners the opportunity to develop important knowledge around important topics such as; knife crime, growth mind-set, social media, body image, anxiety, depression, child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol misuse. External speakers are often engaged to deliver training around these topics and there are clear examples of these sessions resonating with learners, especially those focused around knife crime.

Assessment coordinators also ensure that apprentices benefit from similarly rich activities by running group workshops; these workshops cover a range of topics that are important for apprentices such as health and safety, emotional intelligence, coaching, mental health, Prevent and British Values. These workshops also allow apprentices to meet new people who are completing similar courses to them. All centres are able to signpost learners to local support for sexual health and advice and some centres are visited by local sexual health teams who offer a range of services including free contraception and tests for common sexually transmitted infections.

Most learners understand well their rights and responsibilities as a student, employee and citizen. They are respectful and work well with others to foster productive working relationships.

Learners benefit from opportunities to participate in community projects, fundraising activities and helping others less fortunate. Whilst opportunities were more difficult to access during the national lockdown imposed from March 20 onwards, teachers are effective in drawing upon current newsworthy topics to initiate conversations with learners and assist them in understanding their responsibilities as a citizen within their local communities. An example being discussions taking place around the importance of adhering to the national Covid-19 restrictions and displaying these behaviours whilst learners are attending their training.

Learning environments are inclusive and learners openly talk about their differences without fear of bullying or harassment.

Learners can confidently explain what action they would take if they felt that they were being bullied in the workplace. Childcare pathway learners and apprentices develop the understanding of how to support children with SEND and Customer Service pathway learners develop their understanding of the needs of customers with disabilities. The large majority of learners are able to identify protected characteristics.

Learners are given lots of support to effectively manage their mental health.

Staff are committed to closely monitoring the mental health of learners, as well as capturing information at the recruitment stage pertaining to the mental health of learners and implementing support plans and opening safeguarding cases where necessary. Learners also benefit from attending standalone sessions on this topic and as a result, learners can give clear examples of they can maintain good mental health.

During the national lockdown implemented in March 20, wellbeing checks were maintained for all learners especially those with mental health concerns with a minimum frequency of once weekly. The very large majority of all types of learners including apprentices indicate through forums and surveys that their wellbeing is checked regularly. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the negative impact that this has had on many peoples' mental health, we have recruited a team of counsellors to further support learners with this issue.

Learners gain access to high quality CEIAG from an early stage of the programme and contact with local employers that helps inform decisions around future career goals.

Learners are exposed to conversations around their career aspirations right from the interview stage of their programmes. This is then expanded upon through the MPP stage of the programme where learners self-assess their suitability for their preferred careers and with the assistance of teachers and progression coordinators are able to select pathway that is right for them. The large majority of learners then access the world of work through suitable work experience opportunities with local employers.

Juniper recently achieved the Matrix Standard in January 20, with support for learners, the use of learner feedback, staff support and CPD around CEIAG being highlighted as particular strengths. Most apprentices communicate through learner surveys and forums that they are given enough careers information, advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their future career. The Covid-19 pandemic has limited work experience opportunities with many local businesses closing or furloughing large proportions of their work force and others being understandably concerned about the health and safety of their workers. In response, Juniper have implemented some additional online vocational CPD for learners to undertake through The Skills Network platform, this will ensure that learners continue to develop key sector-specific vocational skills whilst they await the safe return to their work experience placements.

Learners understand well how to keep themselves safe online.

Learners achieve an e-safety milestone as part of their MPP induction period. Learners understand that online learning and increased screen time heightens the risk of radicalisation and other risks such as identity theft and fraud. Apprentices are also well informed about keeping safe online as part of their induction and confidently identify characteristics of individuals who may be more likely to become radicalised and the signs of radicalisation. Surveys and forums show that the overwhelming majority of learners have been given advice and support around keeping safe online.

Learners are resilient and improve their digital skills.

As a direct consequence of the Covid-19 restrictions put in place by government, the very large majority of learners have demonstrated their ability to be flexible and have adapted well to accessing their learning online. Many learners had little or no previous experience of accessing learning via online platforms when the restrictions were introduced. With the support of teachers, learners have gained confidence in screen sharing; using the chat function to interact with their teachers and peers; learning in break out rooms and uploading and downloading work. These skills will be invaluable for learners as they move on into their next steps, especially with many businesses signalling their intent to continue to use these technologies when the pandemic is over.

Learners are well supported so that they are ready for the next phase of education, training or employment and successfully transition to their progression destination.

Careers education, information advice and guidance is good and opportunities exist for learners to receive information on the relevant career pathways from Juniper staff and employers, through taster days, employer visits and significant WEX. As a result, learners receive effective CEIAG that assists them to make decisions about their future careers including their next steps when they complete their programme, this was evident in progression data at the point of the initial lockdown in March 20, with the large majority of learners progressing into positive destinations.

Unfortunately, the lockdown significantly affected the progression opportunities of learners from that point on due to closures of local businesses, recruitment freezes in local businesses and the exceptionally challenging business environment. Progression Coordinators struggled to secure meaningful opportunities for learners during this period but are now successfully re-engaging with learners to ensure that they are supported to access their next steps and also that data is updated for those learners who have already started at their new destination.

The opportunities for learners to explore personal, social and ethical issues and take part in wider society is embedded in all areas of the provision in the large majority of centres.

Learners benefit from multiple opportunities to explore personal, social and ethical issues in lessons and reviews. Examples include debates and discussions on the Brexit, living in a multi-cultural society and celebrating different religious festivals, registering to vote as well as lessons on stereotyping and employment law.

Learners explore topics such as terrorism and extremism, examples include learners exploring risks of being radicalised, right wing extremism, external guest speakers such as the local police Prevent Team. These activities have enabled them to discuss and debate their views in an environment where extreme views can be challenged and concerns raised.

Staff promote equality of opportunity and ensure learners with particular vulnerabilities are well supported, helping them to understand that difference is a positive.

Learners develop their confidence and have a well-rounded understanding of the needs of other learners. They support one another and are respectful of others' experiences and backgrounds. Learners can explain with clarity the support that is available to them and how their needs are met by staff. This results in an inclusive environment where all feel valued by staff and their peers, despite the differences they may have.

Learners requiring additional support are identified during the recruitment and initial assessment phase of their programme and individual Support Plans are put in place. Staff monitor the progress and wellbeing of vulnerable learners and those with protected characteristic, such as learners who are transitioning, learners with learning differences such as dyslexia and autism. They ensure that those students have access to the resources and equipment needed e.g. reading pens, time and space to talk to staff, fidget objects and maths and English mats. Reasonable adjustments are made for exams and assessments and staff engage external agencies effectively so that they feel supported and safe whilst in training centres, at work and in everyday life. A Dyslexia support specialist has been appointed to offer additional support to Dyslexic learners to

further implement the support strategies that have been identified for them and also to help consolidate learning for those learners that require this extra support.

Areas for Improvement

In a few centres, learners have a basic understanding of issues related to British values. However, they have not been supported sufficiently to explore these topics in detail beyond a limited overview.

This requires improvement because in these centres, learners are able to identify British Values and provide examples when prompted. However, their knowledge is surface level and they do not yet understand well enough how these relate to their own context in work and in everyday life. A small minority of apprentices also struggle to contextualise how British Values relate to their work and life.

A minority of centres have well planned activities and sessions to develop learners' understanding of how to keep physically healthy and maintain an active lifestyle. However, this is not yet consistent across the centre network.

Whilst the large majority of learners through forums and surveys, explain that they have received advice and support on how to keep fit and stay healthy, there is a significant minority of learners who cannot explain how they can implement this knowledge into their everyday life. The curriculum in these centres have not yet been sufficiently developed to allow learners to put this knowledge into practice.

A small amount of Generic and Workskills learners are not exposed to the world of work at an early enough stage of their programme.

The small amount of learners who are late to start their work experience placements are often less clear about their career progression and unsure of what they must do to achieve their chosen destination upon completing their programme, supporting readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that learners can make the transition to the next stage successfully.

A small minority of apprentices do not access additional training that develops them beyond the confines of their curriculum.

These apprentices miss opportunities to access an extended curriculum that develops them beyond the technical elements of their programme, this is largely due to a lack of access to the off-the-job training available to them. Assessment coordinators have implemented a good quality suite of additional learning opportunities for apprentices but a few employers still need to be challenged further to support apprentices to complete their off-the-job training.

Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

Strengths

Leaders promote a culture of high expectations of all learners, including those who are disadvantaged and/or have SEND; there is a positive culture in place which supports the large majority of learners to achieve their learning goals and progress to a positive destination.

Overall qualification achievement rates in March 20 were on the same trajectory to meet the high rates of the past 3 years. The large majority of learners were on track to progress to a positive destination at the end of their programme. However, the impact of Covid-19 is clear in the end of year results and whilst the majority of learners achieved their learning goals and progressed, a minority of learners were adversely affected. Just over a third of apprentices and almost half of learners report that their education has been adversely affected by the pandemic (Student and Apprentice Feedback Surveys – December 2020). Leaders and managers have taken action to ensure that learners in the current academic year (2020/21) are able to realise their full potential. Examples include targeted, small group support in maths and English, in-house counselling service and intensive dyslexia support. The quality of remote education has improved and there are strategies in place to nullify the risks posed when restrictions are in place.

The performance of different groups of learners is closely monitored by senior leaders and managers who take effective action to address any areas of underperformance. This ensures that the large majority of learners from SEND groups achieve and progress at least as well as their peers and in the current academic year, disadvantaged learners have outperformed their peers. There is a robust system in place to ensure that all learners with SEND and those from vulnerable groups have individual support plans in place. In a few instances, SEND support needs have not been identified quickly enough and support strategies put in place resulting in slower than expected progress.

Staff benefit from wide ranging CPD opportunities that align well with the curriculum and develops teachers' subject expertise and pedagogical knowledge to enable them to deliver good quality education and training.

CPD opportunities are plentiful and staff benefit from wide-ranging activities to support their subject and pedagogical knowledge. Activities include undertaking formal qualifications, training courses, industry days, company training days, standardisation meetings, self-study/research and shadowing opportunities. Most teaching staff have (or are working towards) appropriate qualifications and have the appropriate training and skills that enable them to effectively plan and deliver training appropriate to industry practice and employers' needs. A few vocational tutors on study programme require industry days to ensure that they refresh their knowledge in their specialist area and whilst current restrictions are preventing them from completing this, this is in their planned CPD.

Learners value and benefit from staff expertise in improving their understanding of the world of work. Staff act as role models to inspire learners to increase their ambitions; they develop effective working relationships with learners to help them to overcome their previous barriers to learning. Staff have responded well, to increase their skills and expertise in using new technology. This has enabled them to use new interactive platforms to deliver learning and assessment activities and they have embraced the opportunity

to develop Juniper's remote education offer. As a result, learners are also benefitting from increasing their digital skills and knowledge, placing them in a strong position to respond to the needs' of employers.

Leaders ensure that all learners benefit from effective teaching and high expectations in classrooms, workshops and whilst at work.

A culture of high expectations is evident in the large majority of lessons and apprentice training sessions. Learners benefit from a well-rounded experience at Juniper. Generally, evidence in learning walks, support and challenge visits and observations signify that teaching and assessment practice is good; tutors are less reliant upon the standard lesson plans and resources and therefore apply a more individualised approach to TLA. Teachers are creative in the delivery of vocational lessons, with learners more engaged in learning activities and more focussed on successfully completing their qualifications. As a result, learners routinely experience good and better teaching and learning, improving their engagement and progress. A few tutors require further training and support to improve their online delivery; managers are aware of their needs and action plans are in place to help them to improve their teaching.

Leaders and staff engage well with learners, parents, their community and employers to support the education and training that learners get.

Most centres involve the support of parents/guardians and support workers to engage learners, in particular, those who have SEND and vulnerabilities. Staff communicate well and welcome their input for example, regular updates are communicated by telephone and email; and parents/guardians/ support workers are invited to attend meetings and interventions, so that learners remain on track with their learning programme.

Regular communication between Juniper staff and employers enable learners to successfully engage with their work experience opportunities. Where issues are identified, Juniper staff act swiftly to provide resolutions so that most learners benefit from meaningful exposure to the world of work.

Leaders are considerate of the workload and wellbeing of their staff. Leaders promote and foster an environment of equality and diversity well and effectively protect learners and staff from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Leaders and managers have instilled a strongly supportive culture throughout the organisation whereby bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated. Workload and caseloads for staff are considered by leaders and staff resource is managed well and as a result 95% of staff report that leaders and managers are considerate of workload and wellbeing (Staff Survey November 2020).

There is a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives in place to support staff including: an Employer Assistance Programme – where staff have access to free counselling and support; an option to join a health cash plan – Health Shield – which provides cover for every day healthcare needs such as dental, physiotherapy, wellbeing, eye tests, prescriptions etc.; staff have an additional day off for their birthday and can access the innovative 'J-Fit' scheme where staff can earn 5 days additional holiday per year when they participate in regular, physical activity; a cycle to work scheme; critical illness cover and flexible holiday scheme which allows staff to purchase up to 10 days additional leave per annum.

The pandemic has undoubtedly affected the wellbeing of staff both personally and professionally with the uncertainties surrounding it. Leaders recognise this and have taken steps to provide assurance and support. Staff report that they feel well supported and appreciate the communication and wellbeing activities put in place. Examples include frequent updates from the Managing Director, consideration of working patterns, Christmas advent prize giveaway, adopting the 'positive things from lockdown', virtual wellbeing quizzes and the use of the staff Facebook page to encourage peer communication, which was particularly important to furloughed staff. In the recent staff survey (November 2020), 99% of staff reported that managers have managed staff safety and wellbeing well through the Covid period and 98% of staff feel that the SMT communicated effectively with them during Covid/lockdown.

Leaders have high ambitions for all learners, including those who are difficult to engage. As a result, learners with low prior attainment improve their life chances and progress into further study or work.

Juniper is helping the learners with poor prior experience of education to recognise and value their skills and abilities to increase their employability prospects. This was evident from August 2019 to March 2020 where a high proportion, many of whom have previously not succeeded in formal learning, secured a positive destination. This was a consequence of their improved engagement, motivation and participation. The immediate impact of the first lockdown resulted in the disengagement of learners but leaders worked tirelessly during this period to re-engage learners. Strategies have been put in place to support those affected by gaps in their education through catch-up sessions in maths and English, dyslexia support and in-house counselling/wellbeing support. This will enable learners to achieve their progression goals and will help to minimise the long-term detrimental effect of Covid-19. 99% of staff feel that Juniper supported students effectively during the Covid pandemic this year (Staff Survey November 2020).

The EDIMs report (Aug 2019 – July 2020) shows that there were 64 learners on study programme in 2019/20 were either in care or leaving care (3% and 2% of all starts respectively). MI data shows that:

- ❖ There have been improvements to the achievement and progression of learners in care for the 2019/20 academic year. However, gaps exist for GCSE maths and English and they do not achieve as well as their peers in these subjects.
- ❖ Previous gaps for leaving care learners have been eradicated and their overall achievement rate and progression rates were higher than their peers.

Whilst it is recognised that national rates of achievement and progression for care learners are very low. In line with government priorities, leaders and managers will continue to monitor this group closely to ensure they achieve parity.

All Learners increase their likelihood of obtaining future employment, by developing vital skills as part of lessons and through work-related activity. Learners are proud of their work and achievements; many of whom have had a poor previous educational experience or have suffered bullying, feel valued and included by staff and their peers. Consequently, they recognise their skills and abilities and have the confidence to access further learning and work.

Governance arrangements are effective; programmes are well maintained and governors hold senior managers and leaders to account.

Effective governance arrangements are in place and as with all other areas of the business, senior leaders and governors have adapted and utilised virtual methods to ensure a clear oversight on quality of the provision and challenge during the pandemic period. The AELP Code of Good Governance, for Independent Learning Providers, has been implemented and the performance and effectiveness of Juniper's governance is assessed against the framework. This ensures the best interests of learners, apprentices, and employers, and that public funds we receive are well spent and focused on meeting our company goals and government priorities. The governors (non-executive governor David Shouesmith and external specialist Jason Lancaster) provide impartial scrutiny and challenge in governance board meetings. Between them, they provide significant experience and expertise in business leadership and management and performance improvement in the education sector. Improvements in the provision are evident in data, provision reviews, learning walks and observations of key learner processes. Leaders and managers are fully aware that the outcomes and quality of teaching, learning and assessment needs to be further improved for GCSE provision and actions to do this are underway.

Clear performance management, business continuity assessment and quality improvement plans have benefitted the quality and performance of Juniper's learning programmes. However, we recognise that specific weaknesses including GCSE achievement and require further work to be improved sufficiently. Financial health remains stable and has been effectively monitored by leaders and managers, through the pandemic period, to ensure that provision and resources can be maintained over time.

Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. Staff routinely identify, help and protect learners who may need early help or who are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming, exploitation, radicalisation or extremism.

Student safety and well-being is paramount. A comprehensive Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance document is well established with clear lines of reporting that are well understood by staff and learners. Learners feel safe and value the supportive environment. Juniper Student Surveys show that 98% of apprentices and 100% of study programme learners 'Felt safe and know how to deal with issues including: radicalisation, extremism, bullying or abuse' (student & apprentice surveys December 2020), this is supported by the views of learners spoken to in student forums. All staff have undertaken Safeguarding training as part of their induction training; in line with 'safer recruitment' policy, DBS checks are undertaken with all staff and a central record held at CSS.

Juniper employs a Deputy Safeguarding Lead and the sole purpose of his role is to oversee the day to day operation for safeguarding; he monitors the progress of all open safeguarding cases and supports Designated Safeguarding and Prevent Officers to ensure that services are engaged rapidly and learners are kept safe. A minimum of three dedicated Designated Safeguarding and Prevent Officers are in place at each centre, all trained to a minimum of Level 3 Designated Persons. Further training and CPD for safeguarding and Prevent is delivered at each company training day, communicated through DSPO E-Bulletins and included in every Quality Meeting.

Photographs of the DSPOs are displayed on the 'Meet the Team Board' in each centre and detailed within the Student Handbook ensuring that learners and staff (from other centres) can immediately recognise them. All work placements, including those for apprenticeships are subject to thorough risk assessments to

evaluate suitability and learners safety. Employers are informed about safeguarding and understand how to report concerns when they arise.

A Prevent risk assessment is in place in line with the criteria of the Prevent Statutory Duty and a Prevent action plan with timescales put in place to ensure continued progress. All new staff undertake Safeguarding/Prevent induction training to enable them to identify and respond appropriately to any concerns or incidents and existing staff have refreshers a minimum of once every three years. All centre staff have received WRAP Training refreshers and training on embedding British Values by Marc Inchley (Home Office Trained).

Evidence from student forums and feedback demonstrate that learners within the centres feel safe and use safe working practices. Tutors, support staff and managers build good relationships with learners, which foster respect and trust and enhance the confidence of learners. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of health and safety including e-safety and secure knowledge and understanding of wider areas such as knife crime, gang culture, bullying etc. These are developed further through information sessions delivered by external partner agencies.

Where risks to learners' wellbeing have been identified, safeguarding processes have been followed and have worked effectively to put in place appropriate measures to protect the wellbeing of learners. Vulnerable learners are identified on centres' ILR reports, so that the progress and achievement can be more closely tracked and monitored by leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers successfully implemented effective quality improvement strategies for the 2019/20 academic year. Consequently, apprenticeship achievement rates are above the national average* with a large proportion of apprentices achieving distinction grades in their end point assessment.

Leaders and managers applied a range of effective methods to secure quality improvements to the apprenticeship provision. These included: a more robust recruitment and initial assessment phase to ensure apprentices are enrolled onto an appropriate programme; better communication between apprentices, employers and assessment coordinators at the start point of the apprenticeship; rigorous performance management processes implemented by the apprenticeship contract manager and staff CPD activities.

**comparison to the latest available published NARTs data 18/19*

Areas for Improvement

Leaders need to address disparity in achievement and progression of the following groups:

- 1. Qualification achievement for 19+ traineeship students requires further improvement before it is good**
- 2. Further reduce disparities in outcomes for learners with mental health conditions**
- 3. Closely monitor achievement for the following minority ethnic groups: Black African, White & Caribbean and Indian learners**
- 4. Ensure that disparities are reduced further for learners with Educational and Health Care Plans**

The most recent EDIMs Data (Aug 2019 – July 2020) shows that previous gaps have been reduced especially for learners with SEND; however, new disparities have emerged for the following minority ethnic groups:

- ❖ Black African
- ❖ Indian

In analysing this EDIMs report, we have taken into account the impact of Covid-19. Data for this year has been affected by the unavoidable lower achievement levels across the board. For example, where learners could not be teacher assessed and moved on to their next destination before they could complete their programme. We recognise that although some gaps have been eradicated, we will continue to monitor those groups where we know we have seen historical under achievement (for example, dyslexic learners and learners with social and emotional difficulties).

Strategies have been implemented to reduce disparity for all groups identified; impact will be closely monitored by senior leaders, managers and the Student Support Manager to ensure that improvements are secured in the next academic year.

A few centres do not sufficiently involve employers in the planning of their curriculum.

There is not enough employer engagement activities at a local level by a minority of managers across the centre network to involve them in planning the curriculum and as a result options for a small minority of learners are limited. In centres where this is good, leaders have built good links with local employers to seek their views on the provision offer and have aligned their offer accordingly. Further work needs to be carried out in the new academic year to secure improvements in this area.

Leaders and managers have yet to secure sufficient improvement to GCSE outcomes.

Published national data from the National Achievement Rates Tables (NARTs - latest available shows achievement rates in 2018/19), evidences that this remains as the biggest challenge facing the sector with only 11% of learners achieving A*-C English and 10% of learners achieving A*-C in maths. **NB:** These results are for 16-18 year old learners in the 'Private Sector Public Funded', which compares the achievement of all private Training Providers.

Juniper's GCSE maths and English achievement in 2019/20 is 22% for maths (a 5% increase when compared to 2018/19) and 20% for English (an 8% increase when compared to 2018/19). Due to the nature of Juniper's roll-on roll-off provision, many learners positively progress before sitting their GCSE exams, which significantly impacts upon achievement rates. That aside, the management board recognises that performance is too low and further improvement is required. Therefore, the delivery of GCSEs will continue to be a priority.