

Tribal Education Ltd (Next Step)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 59076

Name of lead inspector: Penelope Horner HMI

Last day of inspection: 18 November 2011

Type of provider: Next Step contract

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Information about the provider

1. Tribal Education Ltd (Tribal) is the prime contractor for Next Step services in Avon and Bristol, Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire, Bath and parts of north-east Somerset. The region consists of remote rural and urban communities, and includes areas of considerable diversity and areas of high deprivation. Tribal began delivering the contract for face-to-face Next Step service for the region in August 2010. Its contract for this service has not been inspected before.
2. Provision is overseen by Tribal's operations director for careers. She is supported by a Next Step manager. A team manager is responsible for 15 advisers, employed by Tribal to provide 30% of the Next Step contract across the region. The remainder of the contract is provided by 25 subcontractors. Subcontracted provision is managed by a partnership manager. A training coordinator is responsible for training and development across the network. She is also responsible for the programme of observations to monitor and improve the quality of advice sessions and for the quality of action plans. Tribal's quality improvement manager left the company very recently, and has not yet been replaced. Staff at Tribal provide additional business support.
3. Tribal's head office for its Next Step service is in Bristol, although many staff work from home. Advisers provide services at 22 out of 23 Jobcentre Plus offices in the region and at various community locations including subcontractors' main centres and outreach venues. Services are provided on demand; advisers visit some centres only when customers have appointments booked there.

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision

Grade 2

Capacity to improve

Grade 2

	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Overall effectiveness

4. Tribal's Next Step service is very effective in helping customers to progress to learning or employment. The proportion of customers who progress to learning is high, and is satisfactory for progression to employment. In the majority of advice sessions, advisers use the time available very effectively to explore and identify customers' skills and personal qualities, and their learning or employment goals. They provide good information and advice to help customers achieve these goals and to help overcome any barriers to learning or employment. Customers' self-confidence and motivation improves considerably during their sessions. However, in a small minority of sessions, advisers do not do enough to explore or provide information on the widest range of suitable learning or employment options for customers. Advisers' completion of electronic documents interferes with discussion in a small number of sessions. Leaders and managers of the service provide good strategic direction for the service. They have developed a network of subcontracted and directly delivered provision that is particularly successful in meeting the needs of customers in the region, and particularly in areas of high deprivation. They monitor and manage performance well, with a strong emphasis on outcomes for customers. Staff are well trained and have a clear understanding of the purpose of the service they provide. Although managers and staff take a wide range of suitable actions to improve attendance, they have not yet been successful in reducing the number of customers who fail to attend sessions at all venues in the region.

Main findings

- Outcomes for customers are good. At over 80%, the proportion of customers progressing to learning or employment is high. Tribal has very effective arrangements for following up customers. Although Tribal takes appropriate steps to encourage customers to attend their planned appointments, attendance is low, particularly at some Jobcentre Plus venues.
- Customers participate well in sessions and develop a clear picture of what they need to do to achieve their goals. Their self-confidence and motivation increases significantly. They are in a much better position to overcome any barriers to learning or employment and to progress.
- During sessions, advisers quickly and accurately identify customers' needs, skills and personal qualities. They use resources well to inform customers of relevant options and give customers good encouragement. However in a minority of observed sessions, advisers did not explore a sufficiently wide range of learning or employment opportunities to broaden customers' knowledge of options that they might not otherwise have considered.
- Advisers make good use of a range of listening and questioning skills to identify customers' skills and barriers to progress. They are sensitive and respond appropriately to individual customers' needs. They involve customers effectively in preparing action plans that summarise discussions and meet customers' particular circumstances. Plans are generally clear and specific, and provide suitable timescales for action.
- Advisers test and reinforce customers' commitment to their action plans during, and at the end of, sessions. In the best sessions, advisers use technology well to complement and enhance the process. However, action plan completion is not always managed effectively and interrupts the session's flow. A minority of customers are not given a completed plan on leaving the session.
- Provision meets the needs of customers well. Sessions are held in a wide variety of accessible locations and at times to suit customers. Venues are welcoming with good safeguarding arrangements. Partnership working is good. Tribal has good relationships with Jobcentre Plus and with a wide range of organisations that support customers into learning, volunteering and paid employment.
- Most advisers give high priority, and take appropriate action, to address customers' literacy, language and numeracy needs. Advisers refer customers appropriately for assessment or further help and support. Customers are better able to evaluate their own skills and knowledge and are supported well to identify their personal barriers to work and how they can overcome them.
- Senior managers provide clear strategic direction for the Next Step service, which supports national and local priorities well. Managers have responded well to developing the service during a period of changing economic circumstances and priorities in the region. Tribal has good working links with its subcontractors and provides well-targeted support to help develop and widen the service.

- Tribal's processes for the performance management of subcontracted and direct provision are clear and effective. Managers make very good use of data and management information to monitor and evaluate provision. Tribal provides particularly good training for its network of advisers, to improve their skills.
- Tribal has good arrangements for checking that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable adults. Its safeguarding training is particularly thorough. Advisers promote safeguarding well in sessions. Any disclosures are investigated swiftly, using clear procedures. However, in its checks on subcontractors' safeguarding arrangements, Tribal is not always given data on any disclosures relating to Next Step that they have dealt with.
- Tribal has been successful in developing provision to reach customers in its diverse region. It has been particularly successful at making the service available in areas of high deprivation. Almost one quarter of its customers are from these areas. Advisers are well-trained in equality and diversity and their skills in promoting it in sessions are good.
- Tribal has detailed and thorough quality improvement systems that are clear, well understood by staff and subcontractors, and effective in improving provision. Tribal's self-assessment makes good use of quality assurance activities and of feedback from customers, advisers and subcontractors. However, Tribal does not do enough to validate subcontractors' own quality assurance systems to ensure they are similarly thorough and effective.

What does Tribal Education Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Continue to implement planned actions to improve customers' attendance at Next Step sessions in order to reduce the number of customers who fail to attend their planned intervention.
- Further improve the quality of sessions by ensuring that all customers receive information and advice on the widest range of suitable learning and work opportunities.
- Improve action planning processes so that information is captured and recorded efficiently and that all customers leave the session with an accurately completed action plan.
- Introduce systems to validate the quality assurance checks carried out by subcontractors to ensure that they are thorough and lead to improvement in provision.
- Develop subcontractor review processes to ensure that Tribal receives subcontractor data on safeguarding disclosures relating to Next Step.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What customers like:

- the open and friendly advisers who give very good help
- learning about the learning and employment options available to them

- the non-judgemental approach of advisers, that makes them feel comfortable talking about concerns and difficulties
- help with producing a CV and improving their interview skills
- the improvements in their confidence
- identifying their skills and experience
- finding out what employers want.

What customers would like to see improved:

- the information on what Next Step involves and their entitlement
- waiting times for appointments and the punctuality of their start times
- the privacy during some sessions
- arrangements for advisers to access documents that customers want to discuss and that are stored on customers' electronic memory devices.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**What employers like:**

- the helpful support they get with their redundancy programmes
- the preparation for future jobsearch given to employees under threat of redundancy.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the availability of the service during unsocial hours – they would like to be able to set sessions up more quickly.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

5. Since gaining the contract in August 2010, Tribal has made good use of its performance management and quality assurance systems to develop provision in line with its planned strategic direction and against a background of changing economic priorities for the service. Its observation programme to monitor and improve the quality of advice sessions is well established and accurate. It is used well to improve individual advisers' performance and to plan a programme of adviser training. Tribal has introduced systems for the capture and analysis of a wide range of data and managers make good use of this data to monitor and evaluate the performance of Tribal's subcontractors and direct delivery team. Managers take prompt action to improve when the need is identified. Tribal has developed and introduced an effective computer information system that has significantly improved communication with subcontractors and the direct delivery team. It has improved its arrangements for collecting feedback from customers and employers, and makes good use of this in evaluating its service. Tribal has successfully built capacity in its direct delivery team, to make the service more accessible in the region.
6. Tribal's self-assessment process is good. It is inclusive and well understood by staff. It makes good use of feedback from service users and subcontractors. The resulting report is broadly accurate, concise and provides suitable evidence to support key judgements. Quality improvement plans are clear, realistic and used well to improve the service.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

7. Outcomes for customers are good. The proportion of customers progressing to learning or employment is high. Tribal has very effective arrangements for following up customers. During the first two quarters of the contract for which complete data are available, over 80% of customers progressed to learning or employment. Progression to learning was particularly high. Progression to employment was satisfactory. Tribal monitors the participation of, and outcomes for, different groups of customers. There are no significant disparities in the performance of these different groups.
8. Attendance at sessions is sometimes low. Tribal and its subcontractors routinely contact customers to remind them of their appointments and take action to ensure that they are well informed about the service. In some venues these actions have been successful in reducing the number of customers who fail to attend their planned session. However, they have not yet led to sustained improvement across all the provision.
9. During sessions, most customers are helped to evaluate their existing skills and knowledge and to identify any barriers to work and training. They are given

good information on the options available to them, to help them progress. In a minority of sessions, however, the range of options considered by advisers is too narrow and does not make customers sufficiently aware of options that they might not otherwise have considered.

10. Customers' self-confidence and motivation increase significantly during their sessions. They are given good information on ways of enhancing their economic well-being, including information on voluntary work where appropriate. Customers say that they feel safe in Next Step venues.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. The quality of advice sessions overall, is good. In the better sessions, advisers make good use of listening, questioning, paraphrasing, summarising and recapping skills to help customers. Sessions are well structured and paced, and customers are given effective encouragement to articulate their needs and priorities. Most advisers have very good knowledge of the employment, volunteering and learning opportunities available locally. They make good use of this, of local labour market information and of online and paper-based resources to inform customers of the options available to them. At the end of sessions, most customers are clear about the agreed actions they need to take to achieve their learning or employment goals.
12. Most action plans summarise discussions well and capture customers' skills, attributes and goals effectively. In the majority of sessions, advisers are adept at involving customers in agreeing actions that are clear and specific. However, in less effective sessions, the action plan, rather than the customer, becomes the focus of attention and completion of the plan takes up a disproportionate amount of time. A small number of sessions are insufficiently well structured. Customers are not always given an agreed action plan to take away with them.
13. Tribal's provision meets customers needs well. The service is very responsive to the needs of customers in areas of high deprivation, to particular demographic groups and to the needs of employees facing redundancy. Venues are conveniently located and the service is provided at times to meet customers' needs. Many provide a high level of privacy. However, a few open plan offices are noisy and less private. Some customers are not sufficiently clear about the purpose of Next Step or their entitlement.
14. Partnership working is very effective. Tribal has built good relationships with Jobcentre Plus and its network of subcontractors to create a coherent service for customers. It has good links with a wide range of specialist organisations that can provide additional help for customers.
15. Care, guidance and support for customers are good. Advisers usually give a high priority to customers' literacy, language and numeracy needs and emphasise these as a basis for progression. They identify customers' barriers to progress sensitively and give customers good information on the additional or

specialist support that they might need to accelerate the achievement of their learning or employment goals.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. Senior managers provide clear strategic direction for the provision of Next Step services to ensure that they meet national and local priorities well. Managers have responded particularly well to developing the service during a period of economic change in the region. Staff have a good understanding of Next Step's objectives and the part they play in developing the service. Tribal has successfully developed a strong network of subcontractors to provide wide geographical coverage and to meet the needs of specific groups in the region. Advisers are well qualified and Tribal offers good training to develop their skills further. Advisers meet regularly to share good practice. Communications are good and Tribal provides its subcontractors and direct delivery team with a good range of resource materials.
17. Tribal has clear processes for the performance management of subcontracted and directly delivered provision. Where necessary, managers challenge poor performance and take effective action to improve provision. They collect and analyse a wide range of information and data and make very effective use of it to monitor and develop the service.
18. Tribal has thorough and well-designed arrangements for checking that staff are suitable to work in Next Step provision and with vulnerable adults. It takes particular care to ensure that all advisers are properly trained and kept up-to-date in safeguarding. It keeps careful records of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and staff training. Advisers promote safeguarding well, and sensitively, in sessions. Tribal has clear and effective procedures for following up safeguarding disclosures which are well understood, and used when necessary, by advisers. It pays careful attention to the health and safety of advisers who work alone and has arranged additional training and support for these advisers. Tribal monitors its subcontractors' safeguarding arrangements effectively and checks that their procedures are suitable and well understood. However, it does not always receive information on the safeguarding disclosures they have dealt with.
19. Tribal's promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers have taken good care to build a network of subcontractors that has good links with potential customers in the dispersed rural and urban communities that it serves. Several subcontractors specialise in working with particular groups of customers such as ex-offenders, people with disabilities or with disadvantaged communities. It deploys its direct delivery team well, to meet its customers' needs. Tribal makes very good use of data to monitor its reach and ensure it meets customers' needs. It has been particularly successful in encouraging people from areas of high deprivation to participate. Almost one quarter of its customers come from areas of high deprivation. Tribal provides well designed and memorable training

in equality and diversity for advisers. Their knowledge of how to promote it in sessions is good.

20. Tribal has good systems for collecting feedback from users, and managers use this well to improve the Next Step service. They respond promptly to any concerns expressed by customers. They make effective use of feedback from subcontractors in preparing plans for improvement. Employers who have staff at risk of redundancy find the service very effective. However, Tribal has not yet done sufficient work with other employers to promote it to people who want to progress in employment.
21. Tribal's self-assessment process is inclusive and used effectively to help improve the quality of provision. Judgements in the self-assessment report are clear and supported with relevant evidence. The associated quality improvement plan is implemented well and used effectively at monthly managers' meetings to assess progress. Tribal's quality assurance systems for its subcontracted and directly delivered provision are well-designed and thorough. They are effective in providing managers with a good understanding of the quality of provision overall and of variations in quality between different subcontractors. Tribal's observation programme is well planned and gives managers good information on areas of strength and for improvement in the quality of sessions. Observers give beneficial feedback and associated development plans help individual advisers to improve. Managers moderate observation reports carefully and use the findings to help plan training for advisers. Managers have effective systems for monitoring and improving the quality of action plans. However, they do not yet have systems to validate the quality assurance processes of subcontractors to ensure that they are similarly thorough and effective. Subcontractors and managers encourage peer observation. However, Tribal does not have structured processes to help ensure that this happens. Tribal uses a suitable range of strategies to improve customers' attendance at sessions. However, these have yet to prove consistently successful across all of the provision. Tribal provides good value for money.

Information about the inspection

22. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations director for careers, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and data on customers and their achievement over the period since the contact began.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of customers and employers. They also looked at questionnaires customers and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed information and advice and staff training sessions. Inspectors collected evidence from across the region served by the provider.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Tribal Education Ltd (Next Step)**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Next Step
Approximate number of customers	
Full-time customers	0
Part-time customers	22,000
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve	2
Outcomes for learners	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2
How well do learners progress?	2
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2
How safe do learners feel?	2
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2
Quality of provision	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2
Leadership and management	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2

*where applicable to the type of provision

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