

CSM Consulting Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51433

Name of lead inspector: Maria Barker HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 March 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. CSM Consulting Ltd (CSM) is a private training provider which was established in 2003 to provide employer-related training. Since 2010 it has been based near Bridgwater, having moved from Taunton. The provision is spread across the country, with recent increases in learners in the London area. All provision is funded through Skills Funding Agency contracts.
2. In 2010/11 CSM provided National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) through Train to Gain provision in a number of subject areas, some of which were very small. In 2011/12, CSM introduced apprenticeship programmes. Of the current 678 learners, 422 are on apprenticeships and the rest are working towards NVQs in the workplace. Learners are on programmes in health, public services and social care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; service enterprises; education and training; and, business, administration and law. The provision in health, public services and care and education and training is new.
3. Since 2009, CSM has altered its staffing structure, from one which was based on permanent staff to one which has a core of eight permanent staff including two assessors and over twenty freelance assessors and three internal verifiers.
4. CSM was inspected in March 2006 as a provider of the employer training pilot programme. At the time it was judged to be a good provider. None of the current staff was at CSM at the time of the inspection. The provision has altered significantly since the inspection, particularly in the current year.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - Davy Liver Ltd (transport operations and maintenance)
 - Twin Training International Ltd (health, public services and care; direct learning support; business, administration and law).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	1,240 learners 0 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	
Retail and commercial enterprise	3
Education and training	3
Business, administration and law	3

Overall effectiveness

6. Learners have achieved well on most Train to Gain provision. This year, CSM has introduced apprenticeship programmes and it is too early to tell how well learners will achieve on this provision. Some learners are making slow progress, and some assessment opportunities have been delayed. Most learners enjoy their courses, they gain in confidence and improve their work skills. They feel safe in the workplace and demonstrate safe working practices.
7. Training and assessment are generally appropriate and sometimes good. Assessors arrange coaching and assessment visits flexibly to fit in with learners' work commitments. Most provision meets learners' and employers' needs well. In some cases, learners are not on sufficiently challenging programmes. CSM has good partnerships with its subcontractors and with the GMB union, which offers good support to learners on education and training courses. Learners receive good academic and personal support. However, learners' progress reviews are not effective. Learners whose first language is not English need more support in developing their language skills.

8. CSM has made significant changes to introduce apprenticeship programmes. Many assessors are new to CSM, and are not yet familiar with CSM's processes. CSM has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding learners. It recognises the need to increase staff confidence in responding appropriately to any concerns raised. CSM regularly checks whether any achievement gaps exist between different groups of learners and has found no significant differences. It promotes equality and diversity appropriately, but does not ensure that learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters is well recorded in progress reviews. CSM does not yet monitor learners' progress throughout their programmes. It has introduced new quality assurance arrangements to monitor and improve the provision, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes have been good, apart from in business, administration and law. It is too early to make judgements on outcomes in apprenticeship programmes. Current learners are making satisfactory progress overall, although some slow progress was identified by inspectors.
- Learners generally gain in confidence and develop their work-based skills appropriately. Employers provide valuable additional job-related training. Some offer short qualifications, for example in health and safety and first aid. Learners increase their employability skills and some gain promotion as a result of their improved workplace skills.
- Learners feel safe and have an appropriate understanding of health and safety matters. CSM carries out comprehensive risk assessments of the workplace and promotes health and safety in the workplace well. CSM ensures that learners have an appropriate understanding of bullying and harassment through its induction programme and material in the learner handbook.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. CSM staff use an appropriate range of training and assessment practices. CSM is developing suitable new resources for apprenticeship programmes. For example, it has produced a range of relevant projects to assess learners' key skills. However, CSM has insufficiently-established arrangements to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills.
- CSM offers a range of programmes over a wide geographical area to meet the needs of learners and employers. Assessors use a flexible approach and ensure that learning is relevant and meets business needs. In some subject areas, learners are not always on the most appropriate programme or challenged sufficiently by the level of their qualification aim.
- CSM has strong and effective partnerships with its subcontractors. It has a highly effective relationship with the GMB union, which helps learners on education and training programmes to gain access to appropriate provision and supports them well. However, CSM has insufficient links with organisations with expertise in education and training to support the full implementation of apprenticeships.

- CSM does not use progress reviews effectively. Many assessors do not complete progress review forms comprehensively. Forms do not include sufficient detail of learners' interim achievements or clear and specific action plans for what learners need to do before their next assessment visit.
- CSM has satisfactory leadership and management. It has a successful track record of offering Train to Gain provision. Experienced board members understand and monitor performance closely. CSM is changing the profile and focus of its provision by moving to apprenticeships and new subject areas. It is too early to identify the effectiveness of these changes.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. CSM meets legal requirements but has limited experience of dealing with children and vulnerable adults. It has few links with external agencies to provide practical training and support to staff in dealing with safeguarding concerns.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. CSM monitors performance by different groups well and has not identified any significant achievement gaps. Progress reviews do not effectively record learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters. CSM does not provide effective language training for learners who do not have English as their first language.
- CSM implements rigorous monitoring systems which focus on assessors' activities, but do not include information on learners' progress through their programmes. CSM does not collect or use data about learners' progress, and does not have an overview of whether learners make appropriate progress, particularly through the apprenticeship framework.
- CSM has revised its quality assurance systems, which take into account learners' views and now provide a comprehensive coverage of the company's operations. Currently, it does not apply all elements of the system consistently. The system does not yet provide a basis for effective performance management that raises quality and standards.

What does CSM need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills by ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and qualified, particularly in providing language support for learners whose first language is not English.
- Ensure that all learners are aware of their current progress and what they need to do to achieve their goals in a timely fashion by improving the recording of achievement to date and clearly identifying specific targets for action in progress reviews.
- Ensure that management expertise in apprenticeship programmes is extended to support new staff effectively in implementing the requirements of apprenticeship frameworks through the development of effective links with appropriate external agencies.
- Improve safeguarding arrangements by systematically implementing recording processes and strengthening links with appropriate external agencies, such as local safeguarding boards.

- Promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity more thoroughly by ensuring that assessors and trainers include equality and diversity matters effectively in training materials and use progress reviews to reinforce and systematically record learners' understanding of equality and diversity.
- Implement systems to record and monitor learners' progress throughout their programmes by collecting and analysing data on learners' progress and using this data to monitor progress and develop clear targets for learners and assessors.
- Improve and monitor the quality of provision by implementing the quality assurance system consistently across the provision, identifying areas for improvement, setting clear targets to support these improvements and monitoring their effectiveness.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very good support from friendly, approachable assessors who explain things clearly
- flexible visits by the assessor to meet shift patterns
- gaining a qualification which helps with future jobs
- becoming more confident and gaining a better insight into job roles
- increasing in knowledge and understanding which helps with job roles
- sharing experiences with colleagues in group training sessions
- supportive employers who provide additional training such as first aid and health and safety
- recognition by employers of increased skills, and therefore giving more responsibilities.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the frequency of group training sessions
- the amount of writing involved in assessment which is too much
- the development of new skills and knowledge rather than just getting credit for existing skills
- the number of work-related key skills projects
- the opportunity to learn English
- the involvement of employers in progress reviews
- being able to keep their own portfolio rather than having it held by the assessor.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- employees gaining skills such as team building, project management and communications and showing more initiative
- being able to delegate more responsibilities to learners as their confidence grows
- very friendly assessors who are flexible and fit the programme well with business needs
- good communications with CSM, who are very professional.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the frequency of direct observations of the learners by assessors
- the coordination of key skills and the NVQ.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. CSM demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. A well-informed board of directors maintains effective oversight of the provision. Managers focus well on success rates and keep tight control over finances. CSM has good links with employers that successfully extend provision to a wider group of learners.
10. CSM has successfully rectified some of the key challenges identified at the previous inspection, for example initial assessment and induction arrangements. However, other key challenges, such as effective literacy, numeracy and language support for learners and increasing the sharing of good practice are still issues that CSM has to resolve.
11. CSM has a good track record as a Train to Gain provider. The introduction of apprenticeship programmes in 2011/12 presents new challenges to the organisation. CSM has taken appropriate actions to introduce apprenticeships. It has largely replaced full-time assessors with freelance assessors with experience of apprenticeship programmes. It is too early to judge how successfully CSM has managed this move to apprenticeships. Most assessors are relatively new in post, and have not yet attended team meetings or staff development activities. They are yet to participate in self-assessment activity. CSM has clear plans to implement and consolidate these activities, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.
12. CSM knows the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and recognises the need to monitor the progress of current learners. CSM has comprehensive self-assessment processes, but these have yet to lead to the consistent improvement of the new apprenticeship provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

13. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Most Train to Gain provision had good success rates overall. However, success rates were satisfactory in business, administration and law, and inadequate in management provision. It is too early for success rate data to be available for apprenticeships, although a few learners have completed their programmes. Some learners are making slow progress. Assessment has been delayed for some recently recruited learners. Some learners have reached their anticipated completion date, but have yet to finish their qualification.
14. Learners generally enjoy their programmes and gain in confidence. They develop appropriate work-based skills. Many employers provide good on-the-job training. Some provide additional qualifications in health and safety and first aid. Learners improve their employability skills and some have been promoted as a result of improvements in their workplace skills.

15. Learners feel safe. Learners on education and training programmes develop a good awareness of safeguarding and equality and inclusion. CSM carries out extensive risk assessments of the workplace. Employers ensure that learners have a good understanding of health and safety matters and adopt safe working practices. Learners have an appropriate understanding of bullying and harassment in the workplace and know what to do to report any concerns.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

16. CSM provides satisfactory teaching, training and assessment. Learners enjoy workshops and learning sessions, which are planned appropriately and include a range of well-produced resources. Assessors use a suitable variety of methods and media to capture evidence. Portfolios are well presented. However, some assessment is too assessor-led and misses opportunities for learners to develop independence in presenting evidence. Learners receive appropriate feedback on assessment but action plans do not generally include sufficiently specific targets.
17. CSM does not have sufficient arrangements to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. CSM carries out appropriate initial assessment at induction, and has recently introduced more detailed diagnostic testing to pinpoint particular difficulties. It uses this information to plan support. Some learners have achieved Skills for Life qualifications. However, CSM has insufficient specialist expertise in supporting and developing literacy, numeracy and language skills. Plans to cover the key skills element of apprenticeships are not yet fully implemented. CSM has recently produced appropriate templates for key skills projects in each subject area.
18. CSM offers a range of programmes over a wide geographical area to meet learners' and employers' needs. These include qualifications for taxi drivers in Liverpool and the Wirral and for workers in hospitals and food factories. CSM engages well with employers to help them meet their training needs through detailed organisational needs analyses. Assessors visit learners at times that suit their shifts and availability. Learners are not always on the most appropriate programme. Some learners who would benefit from an advanced programme are working towards an intermediate qualification which does not challenge them.
19. CSM works closely with both of its subcontractors. Both are based in areas of deprivation where they have good contacts that enable local people to gain employment. A good relationship with the GMB union and schools enables teaching assistants to accredit the skills they gain and to support children's learning better. However, CSM has insufficient links to local provider networks with apprenticeship expertise to develop this provision speedily and effectively.
20. Progress reviews are ineffective. Newly-designed forms have an appropriate structure, but assessors do not complete them fully. Completed review forms include insufficient detail about what learners have achieved and what they

need to do next. Targets are too broad and do not specify clear actions for learners. Deadlines, when they are set, are not specific enough to guide learners' progress through their programmes. Review forms prompt assessors to discuss health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity matters. However, assessors often leave these sections blank.

21. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Induction is well planned and comprehensive. The learner handbook is well produced and contains a suitable range of information including contact details, and legislation on key areas such as health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity. Assessors are approachable and support learners well. However, CSM does not ensure that all learners with identified need are supported effectively, and does not have appropriate arrangements to support learners whose first language is not English.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

22. CSM has satisfactory leadership and management. Until recently, it successfully operated a range of Train to Gain programmes. It has recently reappraised its operations, responded to changes in national training priorities and moved into apprenticeship provision. Some of its apprenticeship provision is in subject areas that are new to the company. These significant changes to provision and staffing have not all gone smoothly, but leaders and managers are aware of the problems they face and are taking appropriate actions.
23. The board of directors has good oversight of CSM's activities. Board members, most of whom were involved in setting up the company, have a good knowledge of the education and training sector. They meet twice a year and set CSM's strategic direction. They understand the company and are well informed about its performance. The board has approved the change of strategic direction, staffing and training programmes.
24. CSM has satisfactory safeguarding arrangements. It meets its legal requirements to check that staff who work with vulnerable adults and children are suitable, although it currently has very few learners in either category. Some of the recording of the information held about criminal record checks are not sufficiently detailed. The designated safeguarding officer and most staff have taken part in appropriate training, mainly through online programmes. CSM has not provided face-to-face training to ensure that staff are confident in responding to safeguarding concerns. CSM has very limited experience of dealing with, and resolving, any concerns around safeguarding. It recognises that its links with local safeguarding boards and wider support networks need to be strengthened.
25. CSM promotes equality and diversity appropriately. It regularly carries out detailed analysis of the performance of learners by ethnic group and by gender. CSM does not have large numbers of learners from minority ethnic groups on its provision. It has not identified any consistent gaps in achievement. CSM

does not have arrangements to provide appropriate support for learners whose first language is not English. Although progress reviews include the checking of learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters, a significant number provide insufficient detail to demonstrate the reinforcement of learners' understanding.

26. Learners' views are collected systematically and analysed in detail. Feedback from learners about the provision is generally positive. CSM ensures that it takes action appropriately to respond to any concerns raised by learners. However, CSM does not always focus sufficiently on identifying learners' or employers' views on how the provision could be further improved.
27. CSM has recently introduced comprehensive quality assurance systems. These are not yet systematically and consistently applied to manage performance effectively. Self-assessment reports do not identify areas for improvement sufficiently clearly. Many assessors are newly in post and have yet to play a full part in self-assessment activity. CSM has effective internal verification arrangements. It monitors the quality of subcontractors' work well. Staff development has been good, but many of the assessors are new and have not received any training.
28. Although CSM monitors assessors' activities it does not have an overview of learners' progress. CSM does not collect and analyse data to monitor learners' progress. Individual learners' progress is discussed with assessors, but CSM does not collect and analyse information to ensure that learners make appropriate progress throughout their programmes.
29. CSM offers satisfactory value for money. Resources are generally good. Assessors are generally suitably qualified, although CSM does not have sufficient staff who are trained to teach key skills or provide literacy, numeracy and language support to learners with identified learning needs.

Subject areas

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 3

Context

30. Currently, CSM has 106 learners working towards a qualification in cleaning and support services at intermediate level. Of these, 25 are on an apprenticeship programme, with 81 undertaking an NVQ. All learners are employed with one large employer, working in locations across the Midlands, south and south east of England. The current cohort are relatively new on programme, having all started since the end of November 2011. CSM has one full-time and three freelance assessors. All training and assessment take place in the workplace.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners on the programmes are satisfactory overall. Historically, CSM has high success rates for learners on Train to Gain programmes. However, for the current cohort of learners, progress is too slow. Most learners are making a slow start to their programme and are behind target to achieve on time.
- Learners develop their social and vocational skills to a satisfactory level. Most learners have substantial experience in the job role, and work to a good standard. Most enjoy working towards their qualification, although a few do not wish to be undertaking the learning programme. The NVQ effectively reinforces learners' knowledge and understanding, particularly in relation to health and safety.
- Learners generally feel safe in their workplaces. They have a good understanding of health and safety requirements and demonstrate safe working practices. The learner handbook provides useful information in relation to safeguarding and equality and diversity matters.
- Training, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall. Assessors use coaching effectively to reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding. CSM is developing some useful learning resource materials to support learners with identified learning needs. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of newly-developed additional resources for the apprenticeship framework.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors use observation and questioning well to judge learners' competence. They use equipment such as video and voice recorders effectively to support the assessment process. Action planning is adequate, but does not always sufficiently challenge learners. Currently, the introduction of assessment to learners' programmes is slow. In many instances, this is delaying learners' progress.
- The provision does not meet learners' needs satisfactorily. All learners undertake an intermediate qualification, regardless of whether their job roles are suited to an advanced qualification. CSM does not provide appropriate

support for learners for whom English is a second language. Assessors' visits are generally flexible, although one assessor has yet to visit learners working at weekends.

- The partnership with the sole employer is working satisfactorily. CSM uses an initial organisational needs analysis effectively to determine the employer's needs and agree a training programme. CSM meets the employer's needs in different geographical locations. However, CSM has not developed further partnerships with other employers, or other organisations such as those who support learners' language needs.
- CSM provides satisfactory advice, guidance and support for learners. Induction is generally effective in providing sufficient information for learners. Assessors are approachable and are developing good working relationships with the learners. Their visits are at least monthly, and learners can easily contact assessors between visits.
- CSM manages the provision satisfactorily. It has recruited new assessors, with good vocational experience to meet the needs of the apprenticeship programme. It has developed new working procedures, documentation, and learning resources. These are not yet fully implemented by assessors. CSM has insufficient systems to monitor learners' progress and to ensure appropriate target setting for learners.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Training for staff has been recent, or is planned for new assessors. CSM undertakes health and safety checks at all workplaces and relevant employers' policies are checked before the start of programme.
- CSM promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. Induction covers the topic briefly and CSM includes useful information in the learners' handbook. Through their increased understanding of such matters, a few learners have raised concerns over the fairness of their treatment in their workplace. However, CSM does not sufficiently check and reinforce learners' understanding throughout the programme or in progress reviews.
- CSM has satisfactory quality improvement arrangements. Although CSM has procedures to observe assessors, new assessors have not yet been formally observed. The self-assessment process is inclusive for established staff. The current self-assessment report, based on Train to Gain provision, does not accurately reflect the provision for the current cohort and does not include areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

What does CSM need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress of current learners by ensuring that assessment activity takes place early in the programme and is planned effectively throughout the programme according to individual learners' requirements.
- Ensure that all learners' needs are met effectively by recruiting them onto programmes with qualifications at an appropriate level and by implementing appropriate support arrangements for learners who do not have English as their first language.

- Improve the learners' experience of their programmes, by ensuring that new working practices are fully implemented and that learning resources for the new apprenticeship programme are developed further and shared effectively.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity by providing more staff training and reinforcing learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters through their programme.
- Ensure that learners make good progress throughout their programmes by developing an effective process to monitor learners' progress throughout their programmes and by setting clear, specific targets for learners in progress reviews.

Education and training

Grade 3

Context

31. Currently, 207 learners are enrolled on provision in this subject area. Most are advanced apprentices taking the diploma in specialist support for teaching and learning in schools. The learners are mostly female and study towards their qualifications in school settings across the country. The provision for learners in the London area is subcontracted. Many learners have enrolled very recently on newly accredited programmes.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Many recent learners have not finished first units yet, while other learners are making overall satisfactory progress in completing their work. Portfolios are presented well, with comprehensive organisational information and evidence of learners' progress to date.
- Learners make satisfactory academic progress, enabling them to understand the theory which underpins their practical work in school. They develop good personal and social skills which improve their confidence and well-being, and help them interact better with children, other learners and with colleagues in school.
- Learners feel safe and secure. They understand safeguarding matters and how to report their concerns. Many have undertaken safeguarding training in their institutions. Trainers cover health and safety and personal well-being issues well in induction, assessment and reviews and through mandatory course units.
- Staff plan sessions well and offer purposeful and focused activities which are varied and engaging. Resources are good. Learners respond positively and enjoy their work. They link theory to their own classroom practice and identify how legislation links to their employer's requirements. Staff check learners' understanding regularly but do not always challenge learners sufficiently with probing questions.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors cooperate with employers to ensure that learners are able to find appropriate work-related evidence for their portfolios. Learners value their assessor's verbal comments. However, written feedback is often descriptive and does not tell learners precisely enough how to improve.
- CSM meets the needs and interests of users well. Arrangements for training and assessment are flexible to fit working patterns. The programme enables learners to improve their competence at work. Employers value the professional development of their staff. Children at school receive better support. The GMB trade union encourages learners who are members to enrol on the programme.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive sound advice and guidance. Induction is thorough. Most learners understand the requirements of their programme well. Learners' additional needs are identified during induction. CSM ensures that specialist learning resources to support learners are available.

Assessors are approachable and friendly, and establish a good professional rapport with learners.

- CSM has satisfactory leadership and management of the provision. Assessors have high aspirations for their learners. CSM managers maintain regular telephone and email contact with assessors and help with any problems. Assessors manage their workload well. CSM does not use data to monitor learners' progress effectively. Meetings of assessors to share good practice have not yet taken place.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. CSM promotes equality and diversity through its policies and procedures well, including at induction. Learners study a mandatory unit on the implementation of inclusion and diversity. Learners have a good understanding how equality and diversity relate to their personal lives and their work.
- CSM has appropriate quality assurance and improvement policies and procedures in place for the programme. These include internal verification, the observation of teaching and learning, and consideration of feedback from learners and employers. The programme is very new and much of the quality initiative has not been implemented yet.

What does CSM need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' progress and achievement by introducing clear mechanisms to monitor learners' progress through the collection and analysis of data throughout their programmes.
- Enable learners to make more effective progress by agreeing more specific actions in learning plans and identifying specific and time-bound targets in progress reviews.
- Improve the sharing of good practice across the provision by implementing regular standardisation and team meetings for staff.
- Improve learners' achievement by fully implementing quality assurance and improvement initiatives.

Business, administration and law

Grade 3

Context

32. CSM has 146 learners, 132 of whom are on apprenticeship programmes. Overall, 118 learners are working towards an intermediate qualification and the remainder are taking advanced qualifications. Ninety of the learners are male. There are 61 learners on customer service programmes, 29 are on business administration programmes, 32 are on team leading qualifications and 24 learners are on management programmes. Of the learners, 76 are based with a subcontractor working in the London area.

Key findings

- Overall success rates for Train to Gain learners are satisfactory but just below the national average. Success rates for completion within the planned time have risen but are over 13 percentage points below the national average. Success rates for management are unsatisfactory at around 20 percentage points below the national average. Learners enjoy their lessons but many are making slow progress. The standard of learners' work is high.
- Most learners, especially those aged under 25, gain in confidence and improve their communication skills. Learners become more job focused and undertake additional responsibilities. Most learners develop research and computer skills well. Some learners enhance their management and decision-making skills. Some learners feel that the qualification accredits existing skills rather than developing new ones.
- Learners feel safe. Learners, assessors and employers have a good awareness of health and safety matters. Learners' understanding of health and safety is checked in reviews and woven into coaching sessions. Employers' settings include care environments and food processing plants where health and safety and hygiene are rigorously enforced.
- Training and assessment are satisfactory. Assessment feedback is generally supportive and clear. Some assessors give insufficient responsibility to learners for organising and storing their portfolios. Assessors have good knowledge of commercial procedures, which they use well in coaching sessions and project guidance. Some employers offer good training in health and safety and first aid. Most provide good on-the-job training.
- Progress reviews are well structured but employers are not always present. However, employers usually communicate well with assessors regarding learners' progress. Target setting in reviews is often too vague. Review forms do not always accurately record the verbal advice given by assessors.
- Most learning programmes match learners' job roles well. In some cases, key skills content is integrated well into programmes and is vocationally relevant. In other cases, key skills assignments and resources are insufficiently job related. CSM does not provide higher key skills or advanced customer service

programmes for more able learners, although assessors direct them to other providers.

- CSM has good operational relationships with employers, some of whom help with assignments. Assessors plan their visits well to meet shift patterns and avoid peak trading times, visiting in the evenings and at weekends. They contact learners frequently between visits. Good collaborative working with the subcontractor provides apprenticeship opportunities for unemployed young people in some areas.
- Assessors give very good personal support to learners, for example those with family problems. CSM provides information about external support agencies at induction. Some assessors have received training in functional skills. Learners generally receive appropriate support for identified literacy and numeracy needs. Assessors are not sufficiently qualified to provide specialist support for learners whose first language is not English.
- Operational management of the provision is satisfactory. Managers monitor assessors' performance regularly. Staff have appropriate vocational qualifications and relevant experience of apprenticeship programmes. Many staff have been appointed recently and CSM has yet to establish effective mechanisms for them to share good practice. CSM has not yet developed an effective strategy for learning support and key skills provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. CSM checks the criminal records of learners working in hospitals and care settings. They have a good understanding of safeguarding matters, particularly in relation to protecting vulnerable adults. Assessors regularly include safeguarding matters in assessment and coaching sessions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Most learners, especially in hospitals and customer service, have a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Assessors regularly reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity matters during assessment and coaching sessions.
- CSM has very effective relationships with the subcontractor. It monitors the subcontractor's performance of retention and achievement targets monthly and identifies learners who have not been visited often enough. CSM uses its own observation processes to monitor the performance of the subcontractor's staff. The subcontractor's staff attend CSM's standardisation meetings and staff development events.
- CSM has satisfactory quality arrangements. New policies and procedures have been standardised across all provision and staff have been trained in their use. CSM has appropriate internal verification processes. The quality of learning resources varies between assessors, but a centralised bank is being developed for use by learners. The self-assessment report was broadly accurate but was insufficiently critical with insufficient direct staff involvement in the process.

What does CSM need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement rates by involving employers more effectively in progress reviews and by setting specific, time-bound targets agreed by both learners and employers.
- Improve training sessions by sharing existing learning resources more widely and developing further contextualised materials that cover both key skills and NVQ requirements.
- Challenge and motivate more able learners by offering both NVQ and key skills qualifications at levels more appropriate to their job roles and abilities.
- Provide more structured support for learners whose first language is not English or who need additional support with key skills by either developing existing staff expertise or recruiting specialist staff.

Information about the inspection

33. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
34. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
CSM Consulting Ltd
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	678	678
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<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>	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
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?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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