

Voyage Healthcare Group Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer provision

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MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Voyage is a national provider of residential supported living and other associated care services to adults with a wide range of learning disabilities and is located in Lichfield. It contracts directly with the National Employer Service to provide apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQ) in the learning area of health and social care.

The majority of learners are on Train to Gain programmes delivered throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Currently 96 learners are on Train to Gain, and nine apprentices and eight advanced apprentices are in training. The number of learners on Train to Gain programmes has increased from 67 and all apprentices are new learners that started their programme after the last inspection.

Voyage was inspected in April 2009. The overall effectiveness, capacity to improve and leadership and management of the provision were judged to be satisfactory, as were safeguarding, equality and diversity and the provision in health and social care. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners and self-assessment and improvement planning.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Voyage made in improving the achievement by learners?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection the achievement and standards of Train to Gain learners were judged to be satisfactory. The overall success rate for learners completing in 2008/09 was high at level two and low at level three. The success rates for learners completing within planned timescales were low.

Since the previous inspection, Voyage has undertaken a major overhaul of its systems and documentation. It has introduced improved systems for monitoring and recording learners' progress. The majority of learners are making satisfactory or better progress.

The overall success rate on Train to Gain is currently 96% and is good. The success rate for learners completing in planned timescales on Train to Gain is currently 15 percentage points above the national rate.

Quality of Provision

Has Voyage maintained the good standard of assessment practice through the revised management structure?

Reasonable progress

Assessment practice was identified as a key strength at the last inspection. The revised management structure and changes to the role of assessor have ensured this standard remains high. Diagnostic testing identifies the levels of literacy and numeracy and the preferred learning style of each candidate well. Assessors use the results effectively to identify the most appropriate way of working with each learner. Managers value the flexible approach taken by assessors to fit visits around the needs of candidates and the work setting. Assessors understand well the detailed assessment policy. Electronic monitoring systems are used effectively to help learners and staff monitor progress against target end dates as identified in the detailed individual learning plans. Reviews are thorough and action plans, with designated timescales, are used effectively to motivate learners to complete their programmes.

The standard of learners' work is good. Portfolios are presented well with a range of evidence including professional discussion recorded onto a CD. Learners demonstrate a growing awareness of their role and professional responsibilities. Assessor feedback at reviews is supportive and constructive, leading to further improvement. A robust internal verification strategy ensures a consistent approach and standards are maintained across the regions.

What progress has Voyage made in developing a Skills for Life strategy?

Reasonable progress

The last inspection identified an under developed Skills for Life strategy as a key area for improvement. A fundamental review, supported by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), has led to the development of a comprehensive Skills for Life support programme. Voyage's comprehensive skills pledge strategy was launched in April 2010, providing the opportunity for all employees to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Training events have been effective at raising staff awareness at all levels within the organisation. Since the previous inspection all assessors have been trained to embed literacy, numeracy and language skills within the delivery of the NVQ. Currently, 17 apprentices are following appropriate courses, but no Train to Gain learners have taken up the programme. A wide range of well-designed paper based and electronic resources are available to support learners. Voyage has reviewed the implications of introducing functional skills in the near future.

Leadership and management

What progress has Voyage made in improving the management of its training programmes?

Significant progress

At the previous inspection management of Train to Gain programmes was judged to be a key area for improvement. Voyage has effectively developed its management of Train to Gain and successfully introduced intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes. Assessors are monitored effectively through monthly one-to-one meetings with the internal verifier compliance manager. Assessors are appraised annually, observed systematically and benefit from career and professional development plans. Assessors are well qualified, vocationally experienced and have appropriate assessor awards. All relevant staff are supported in working towards the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) tutor training course, the Certificate and Diploma courses are also encouraged. In addition staff undertake discrete courses to further develop their understanding of learners' work settings, for example, by working with those with autism or mental health problems.

What progress has Voyage made in improving its quality assurance systems?

Significant progress

Since the previous inspection Voyage has embedded its quality assurance systems and processes well. All aspects of the learner journey are covered effectively by quality assurance activities. Policies and procedures are systematically reviewed. The analysis of overall trends to identify key areas for improvement and to identify and promote good practice is good. Voyage has demonstrated a real commitment to improving the quality of its training materials and has been particularly effective in identifying and producing a range of e-learning materials. Learners' views are collected systematically and at different stages of their programmes. Voyage is aware of the need to use learners' views to identify improvements and is starting to use them more formally to improve the quality of its provision. Staff meetings are planned effectively and records show action points and completion dates. However, no learner representatives attend these meetings. Observations of teaching and learning are not undertaken systematically.

What progress has Voyage made in improving its self-assessment and action-planning processes?

Reasonable progress

Although the self-assessment process was judged to be satisfactory at the April 2009 inspection, inspectors found that staff had limited involvement in self-assessment. Since then Voyage has made reasonable progress in improving this process. The views of users and stakeholders are now gathered to inform the self-assessment process and to improve the provision. For example, learners complete questionnaires at various stages of their programmes. However, more needs to be done formally to collect users' views. Staff have the opportunity to comment on, and make

adjustments to, the draft self-assessment report during the course of regular staff meetings, but this is done informally.

Managers make extensive use of available data to support judgements about trends in achievements by different groups of learners. The post inspection action plan has been used effectively to improve the quality of provision and to inform the self-assessment process. The plan contains clear actions relevant to the main inspection findings and adequately reflects the judgements made in the current self-assessment report.

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