

First City Training Ltd (FCT)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58719

Name of lead inspector: Russell Jordan HMI

Last day of inspection: 10 December 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: First City Training Ltd
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Information about the provider

1. First City Training Ltd (FCT) has been a publicly-funded training provider since May 2008, when it was awarded a contract for Train to Gain in the care sector. It has branches in Swindon, Salisbury and Bournemouth. It specialises in national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for child and adult care at levels 2, 3 and 4, assessor training, and the leadership and management for care services award.
2. The training and assessment staff team comprises seven internal verifiers and fourteen assessors/trainers working on a full-time and part-time basis. FCT is a stand-alone company within a group of companies engaged in the care and nursing sectors. These companies share a director, business development manager and finance department. Candidates are funded both publicly and privately. Public funding accounted for around 80% of FCT's turnover in 2009/10.
3. During the 2009/10 contract year there were around 250 learners, with just over 180 in learning at the time of the inspection. Roughly equal numbers of learners were linked to the Swindon and Bournemouth offices, with around 15% linked to the Salisbury branch. Almost all learners were on health and social care courses; learner numbers were around the same at intermediate and advanced level. All learners in childcare were linked to the Salisbury branch. In 2009/10 some 10% of those learners who completed their course were male and around the same proportion were from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is the first time that Ofsted has inspected FCT.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain	254 learners

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		3
Subject Areas		Grade
Health and social care, and child care		2

Overall effectiveness

4. FCT is a good provider with good capacity to improve. In both years in which it has had a Train to Gain contract FCT has achieved good outcomes for learners. Learners are highly motivated and refer to the role played by their training in increasing their confidence and skills in their jobs. They benefit from additional qualifications which enhance their employability.
5. Highly flexible training, good assessment and support arrangements are rightly valued by learners and their employers. However, the involvement of employers in reviewing learners' progress is inconsistent, so that on- and off-the-job training is not always coordinated fully.
6. Training meets learners' and employers' needs well, and FCT works well with its partners to meet these needs. FCT is inclusive of different groups of learners and has achieved significant successes in supporting learners from minority groups to gain their qualifications. However, FCT does not carry out routinely and systematically the analysis needed to highlight these successes or to identify any possible under-achievement.
7. FCT pays good attention to the safeguarding of learners and promotes this well to staff, learners and employers. Learners feel safe and work safely. FCT knows itself well and makes good use of this knowledge to improve the quality of its

work. However, self-assessment does not evaluate all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) in sufficient depth. Arrangements to seek the views of employers, and to make systematic use of employers' and learners' views to inform self-assessment, are areas for improvement that FCT acknowledges. The meticulous tracking of learners' progress and highly effective quality assurance arrangements ensure that learners' and employers' experiences of support, training and assessment are consistently good, irrespective of their location. Communication within the organisation is good and all staff share a culture of continuous improvement, putting learners at the centre of their work. These factors contribute to FCT being a well-led and well-managed training provider that delivers good value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners who achieve by their planned end date is high. Learners rightly point to how well the training meets their needs, by giving them more confidence and skills in carrying out their job roles.
- Highly flexible training and good assessment and support arrangements are valued by learners and their employers, and contribute to good outcomes for learners. However, the involvement of employers in reviewing learners' progress is inconsistent, so that on- and off-the-job training is not always coordinated fully.
- A good range of provision meets the needs of employers and learners. FCT offers qualifications in health and social care, and the care of young people and children from level 2 to level 4, as well as level 4 qualifications in leadership and management, to meet the requirements of the sector. The range of qualifications available supports learners in gaining work promotions.
- Partnership working is strong. It ensures that the company continues to meet the needs of learners and employers well. It also helps to obtain funding to support learners' achievement of highly relevant additional qualifications which enhance their employability.
- FCT is an inclusive provider and has worked well to support the achievement of men and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pastoral support for all learners is good. However, FCT does not analyse learners' performance data systematically and routinely to identify any possible areas of under-achievement.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good and FCT promotes these well to staff, learners and employers. Criminal record checks are in place for all staff working with learners and the monitoring of records is good. Learners feel safe and pay good attention to safe working practices.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners' understanding is satisfactory for their job roles and responsibilities, but opportunities to develop or reinforce their understanding beyond that required specifically for

their programme and their immediate job role are not taken up. Arrangements to update staff's knowledge are insufficiently regular.

- Quality assurance arrangements are highly effective in ensuring that learners' and employers' experience of training and assessment is consistently good across the three geographical locations in which FCT operates.
- FCT has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement, and provides compelling evidence of improvements made to the provision. However, self-assessment does not evaluate all relevant aspects in sufficient depth, and does not make systematic use of learners' and employers' feedback.
- Leaders and managers are successful in promoting a culture of ambition, continuous improvement and responsiveness throughout the organisation, putting learners at the heart of what they do.

What does First City Training Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the consistent involvement of employers in reviewing learners' progress, so that the coordination of on- and off-the-job training is improved further.
- Ensure that self-assessment provides judgements on all aspects of the CIF in sufficient depth.
- Ensure that employers' views of the benefits of training are sought regularly and methodically; use feedback from learners and employers to inform systematically self-assessment and quality improvement.
- Analyse learners' performance data routinely and systematically to identify any possible areas of under-achievement by different groups of learners.
- Develop opportunities for the progressive development and reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues; plan and implement regular equality and diversity training for staff.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how well training meets their needs
- the high quality of training and assessment
- good support from assessors that helps them make good progress in their learning
- reaching a professional goal, getting a qualification and gaining new knowledge
- the way that the work packs enable them to acquire and demonstrate knowledge effectively, providing time to think and learn
- the flexibility around methods of presenting evidence.

What learners would like to see improved:

In a small minority of cases:

- the opportunity to be able to complete the work/work packs on a computer
- the opportunity to have a textbook or some reading materials in addition to the work packs
- the availability of training in the evenings.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way that FCT meets their training needs very well, and the relevance of the training to their work
- the flexible and thorough approach to training and assessment that fits employers' and their employees' work patterns
- good communication with the provider and high levels of support by trainers and assessors
- the motivation and encouragement provided by FCT for learners
- good feedback on learners' progress and raising issues
- the high standards of learners' work.

What employers would like to see improved:

In a small minority of cases:

- the level of repetition in workbooks
- the degree of focus on personalised care practice
- written feedback on learners' progress.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. FCT has good capacity to improve the quality of its provision. In both years of its Train to Gain contract FCT has achieved good outcomes for learners. FCT has a strong awareness of its strengths and areas for improvement. Quality assurance is very effective in ensuring that learners' and employers' experience of their training, assessment and support are consistently good across the three geographical areas in which FCT operates. The board of directors of the parent company provides good support and challenge to managers. Partnership working is strong in ensuring that the company continues to meet the needs of learners and employers well, and in obtaining funding to support learners' achievement of highly relevant additional qualifications which enhance their employability.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Outcomes for learners are good. In both years in which the provider has been running Train to Gain, the proportion of FCT's learners who achieved by their planned end date has been high, well above the national average, and much higher than is the norm for similar providers of training in care. Learners enjoy their training, are well motivated, and their progress is good. Learners rightly point to the relevance of the training to their needs and how it helps to improve their confidence, skills and understanding in performing their job roles. FCT provides a number of examples in which learners have progressed in their learning to the next level of qualification and have gained promotions at work. Learners have valuable opportunities to gain qualifications in addition to the NVQ. These meet their individual needs and those of their employers well, such as accredited courses in working with clients and service users with dementia. Learners feel safe and pay good attention to safe working practices.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

10. Teaching and learning and assessment are good. Learners use well-prepared work books with case studies and other learning activities which challenge and support their learning successfully. Many learners choose to work independently, using the work books and guided research to develop a good knowledge base; others attend regular workshops or have one-to-one support, where they work systematically through the tasks and benefit from some good group discussion relating learning to the workplace.
11. Learners and their employers value the highly flexible training, good assessment and support arrangements. Assessors plan assessment well so that it is inclusive and meets learners' needs effectively. Assessors are successful in negotiating learning and assessment opportunities with learners and, in many cases, collaborate well with employers to provide a coordinated learning experience, effectively linking on- and off-the-job training. Assessors make

good use of a wide range of evidence and match assessment methods to learners' needs carefully, such as using digital sound recordings to fill in any gaps in knowledge. Assessors make very clear and comprehensive records of their observations, which they cross refer to a wide range of units, making good use of the evidence available. Assessors provide supportive feedback which encourages learners to have confidence in their own abilities. The electronic e-portfolio provides a valuable overview of learners' progress at each stage, and FCT uses this information very well to ensure learners' timely completion. However, very few learners are able to upload completed work themselves, with the majority of work hand written and scanned into the portfolio. A few learners expressed an interest in using or developing their information technology skills, but opportunities to do so are under-developed.

12. FCT works well with partners to ensure that the provision meets the needs of learners and employers well, and to obtain funding to support learners' achievement of highly relevant additional qualifications. Learners have good opportunities to build upon existing experience and are encouraged to consider progression for personal and employment reasons. Learners in child care at level 2 have moved from volunteer status to employed status during the course. Those learners working within the First City group have good opportunities to gain a range of experience in various care settings, such as domiciliary and agency care.
13. Assessors know their learners well and provide good academic and pastoral support in the workplace to ensure that learners achieve in a timely manner. Learners and employers value this highly. Employers value the NVQ qualification; they are supportive and encouraging of learners' progress. Many employers are not involved fully in the formal monitoring of progress. Assessors keep employers informed regularly of learners' progress on an informal basis, but a number of employers would like to receive formal, written feedback.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

14. Directors are exceptionally well informed of developments in their industry and use this information very well to shape the strategic direction of the company. They provide good support and challenge to managers. Leaders and managers are successful in promoting a culture of ambition, continuous improvement and responsiveness throughout the organisation, putting learners at the heart of what they do. Staff rightly judge that communication in FCT is good. They are well informed and the organisation is receptive to their views and ideas. All staff contribute to the self-assessment. They value highly the good emphasis placed on ensuring their continuing professional development.
15. FCT understands clearly its strengths and weaknesses and provides compelling evidence of improvements made to the provision, such as in the meticulous tracking of learners' progress. However, the self-assessment report does not evaluate all aspects of the CIF in sufficient depth. Although communication with employers and learners is good, FCT does not make systematic use of their feedback to inform the self-assessment process. Quality assurance is very

effective in ensuring that learners' and employers' experience of training, assessment and support are consistently good, irrespective of where they are based.

16. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good, and FCT promotes these well to staff, learners and employers. Managers give a high priority to the safety of learners. FCT staff carry out thorough health and safety checks on employers' premises before learners, who are all employed, are accepted on training programmes. The risk assessment of training facilities and learning activities is thorough. Learners are well informed on health and safety in relation to their job roles. They work safely and know how to raise any issues. Criminal record checks are in place for all staff working with learners, and the monitoring of records on these checks is good.
17. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Recruitment to the Train to Gain programme is inclusive of different groups of learners. Policies are clear for both learners and staff and cover relevant legislation. Arrangements to review and update policies are effective. However, there are no systematic arrangements to update staff's knowledge and understanding. Learners' understanding is appropriate for their immediate job roles and responsibilities, and is a requirement of the NVQ. However, assessors do not take up consistently opportunities to develop progressively or reinforce learners' understanding during progress reviews. Data reveal no significant differences in achievement for different groups of learners. FCT reviews on an individual basis reasons for learners making slower progress, or the circumstances in which any learners may have withdrawn from the programme. However, managers do not analyse routinely and systematically data about learners' recruitment and performance to identify any possible under-achievement by particular groups. As a result, FCT has underestimated its successes in supporting the achievement of minority groups. For example, FCT has been very successful in assisting the achievement of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through well-targeted support. The achievements of men are at least as good as those of women.
18. Value for money is good, evidenced by the good outcomes for learners and the extent to which the provision meets the needs of learners and employers.

Information about the inspection

19. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's centre manager, 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
20. 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)**First City Training Ltd (FCT)**

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	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	184	184
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	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>	n/a	
Quality of provision	2	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	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>	2	
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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
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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