

Dawn Hodge Associates Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58534

Name of lead inspector: Mike White HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 October 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Dawn Hodge Associates Ltd (DHA) was formed in 1994 and became incorporated as a limited company in 2000. It has a head office in Neston, Cheshire and operates across the North West, primarily in Merseyside, Cheshire, Warrington and Lancashire.
2. DHA currently holds Skills Funding Agency and European Social Fund (ESF) contracts, specialising primarily in health and social care at levels 2 and 3. These contracts account for around two-thirds of DHA income. Learners work in a range of care settings, with all training and assessment taking place in learners' workplaces. A small management team supports a programme delivery team of five full-time and one part-time staff.
3. At the time of inspection there was a total of 196 learners, with 155 on Train to Gain funded provision, and 41 learners on ESF funded provision, of whom 94 learners were working towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2, and 102 towards an NVQ at level 3.
4. In 2009/10 the proportion of learners in training from minority ethnic groups was 9.7%; 19% of learners were male and 16% of all learners had learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
5. This was the first inspection of DHA.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain	235 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 1
Capacity to improve		Grade 1
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		1
Quality of provision		1
Leadership and management		1
Safeguarding		1
Equality and diversity		1
Subject Areas		Grade
Health, public services and care		1

Overall effectiveness

6. Outcomes for learners are outstanding and learners from all the different groups achieve exceptionally well. Learners make excellent progress on their programmes. Development of skills is very effective and many learners receive increased pay, responsibility and promotion.
7. The quality of training and assessment is outstanding. Initial assessment is used very effectively to plan learning and assessment. Individual coaching is outstanding and assessors are inspirational. Assessors ensure all learners are highly motivated to achieve.
8. Employers are very effectively engaged in planning and reviewing learning. Assessment is particularly effective and all learners and employers have very good awareness of the progress being made. Individual learning plans contain challenging and detailed targets.
9. The support to enable learners to overcome barriers and problems is outstanding. Assessors provide very effective careers guidance, motivating learners to become more ambitious.

10. Very strong leadership sets a clear and well-planned direction. Staff are highly motivated. Since it commenced contracting for Train to Gain provision DHA has implemented significant improvements. Self-assessment is rigorous and the views of learners and employers are used very effectively. Each part of the learners' experience is subject to very thorough quality assurance.
11. Equality and diversity are promoted exceptionally well to learners, staff and employers. The company has outstanding arrangements for the safeguarding of learners.

Main findings

- Success rates for learners are exceptionally good and well above the national average. Males, relatively underperforming in 2008/09, are now achieving at the same high rates as female learners and both are well above national rates. Groups from different minority ethnic backgrounds and learners with disclosed learning difficulties and/or disabilities all achieve exceptionally well.
- Learners develop very effective personal and social skills, which vastly improves their confidence and employability. They discover very effective methods to help overcome problems and learn new ways of understanding the needs of those for whom they care. Learners respond exceptionally well to the very strong emphasis on promotion of care standards and values.
- Learners say they feel very safe in their workplaces. There is particularly good attention to safe working practices and very good awareness of health and safety guidance and procedures. Learners have a thorough and effective understanding of the importance of safety and protection in health and social care settings. Health and safety is regularly and thoroughly reviewed and assessed.
- The quality of training and assessment is outstanding. Initial assessment is very thorough and used very effectively to plan learning and assessment. Training is very well matched to the needs and interests of each learner and employer. Individual coaching is outstanding. Portfolios are very well organised and learners' work is very well presented and is of an exceptionally high standard.
- Equality and diversity are promoted exceptionally well. Assessors have a very effective approach to raising learners' awareness of difference and inequalities. This includes topics which are critical to high standards and values in the care sector. Learners and those they care for experience improved opportunities and choice because of the very close attention to individual rights and responsibilities.
- Partnerships with employers are outstanding and there are very effective arrangements with regional and national sector bodies. Employers are very enthusiastic and value training. They are very effectively engaged in planning and reviewing learning, which motivates learners very well. Assessors provide employers with very effective advice on new developments and guidance within the sector.

- Assessors are inspirational. They have vast experience and outstanding subject knowledge and sector skills. Assessment is particularly effective and learners look forward to meeting their assessor. Learning is valued highly and made very interesting and worthwhile for learners and employers. Assessors meet the needs and interests of learners and employers extremely well.
- Assessors ensure that all learners and their employers have a very good awareness of the level of progress they are making and what they have to do to improve and complete their work. Individual learning plans contain challenging and detailed targets, which are matched very well to learners' individual needs. Recognition and celebration of success are very strong features.
- Support and guidance for all learners is outstanding. Arrangements to support learners with difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Assessors are very effective at ensuring learners overcome barriers and problems. This provides all learners with significantly improved confidence and helps them achieve their qualification. Careers advice is very good and motivates learners to plan for their career and develop significant personal ambition.
- Very strong leadership of the company sets a clear and well-planned direction. Staff are highly motivated. The views of employers and learners are very effectively used to make available high-quality provision. The self-assessment process is accurate, rigorous and inclusive, although not externally validated. The company uses its resources particularly well to provide outstanding value for money.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. Assessors all have considerable management experience in health and social care, ensuring a high prioritisation of safeguarding for learners. Clear policies and procedures complement staff clarity about roles and responsibilities. Particularly good working arrangements with employers and other partners help to ensure a high level of safety awareness.
- Equality and diversity is a high priority for the provider. A very strong culture of mutual respect and understanding permeates through all aspects of the company and is underpinned by very effective policies and procedures. Learners from all cohorts achieve exceptionally well. Staff and learners show a high level of understanding of equality and diversity.
- Each aspect of the learners' experience is quality assured through a rigorous process of observation against expected standards. The results are used well to bring about improvements, benefiting learners with a very high-quality learning experience. However, the observation of training is overly focused on the role of the assessor rather than the learner.

What does Dawn Hodge Associates Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Closely monitor the actions taken to remove the remaining gap between the overall success rates and the proportion of learners succeeding in their agreed time.

- Heighten the focus on learning during observations of training.
- Consider introducing a process of external challenge to further strengthen the validation of the self-assessment process.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the excellent training
- the extremely helpful and supportive tutors
- the high quality of the support
- assessor visits fitting with the constraints of my job
- feedback to help me progress
- being challenged to think about how to improve my performance
- the confidence to do a higher qualification and look for promotion.

What learners would like to see improved:

- no improvements identified.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the friendly and supportive assessors
- being able to use in-house training towards qualifications
- the good communication of learner progress
- the improved job competence and confidence of staff
- the quarterly employers' forum
- the celebration of learner success.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no improvements identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

12. Since the commencement of its Train to Gain contract, DHA has significantly improved the quality of its provision. Learners' outcomes, identified by the provider as an area for improvement early in its contract, are now outstanding and significantly above the national average.
13. Leadership is very strong, setting a clear and well-planned strategic direction underpinned by ambitious but realistic targets. Resources are particularly well used to provide outstanding value for money. Assessors have vast experience, and outstanding subject knowledge and sector skills. Individual coaching is outstanding and assessors are inspirational.
14. Actions to improve the quality of its provision are very effective. The self-assessment process is rigorous and inclusive. Judgements are based on sound evidence and the self-assessment report is accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan is detailed with specific and measurable targets.
15. The user engagement strategy is highly effective in promoting improvement and providing high-quality provision. Provision is carefully tailored to meet the organisational and training needs of employers. Close monitoring of performance ensures employers' and learners' needs are met.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

16. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are exceptionally good. Overall success rates in 2009/10 were in excess of 90% and well above the national average. The proportion of learners succeeding in their planned time is high and 20% above the national average, although below overall success rates. Success rates for the smaller number of business management learners were outstanding at 100%. The two ESF projects have both met participation targets with very high achievement on the completed project.
17. Males achieve at the same high rates as female learners and both are well above national rates. Groups from different minority ethnic backgrounds all achieve exceptionally well, with many at 100% success rate. Learners with disclosed learning difficulties/and or disabilities perform better than their peers and exceed the national average for succeeding in their planned time by nearly 23%.
18. Learners' progress is excellent. They develop very effective skills and increase their knowledge. All learners learn new and more effective ways of doing their jobs, improving their work, and raising standards of care for service users. Learners display exemplary commitment and attitude to their learning, developing very good personal skills, and gaining increased confidence in their

abilities. They discover more effective methods to help overcome problems and learn new ways of understanding the needs of those for whom they care. Learners respond exceptionally well to the very strong emphasis on the promotion of care standards and values. Many learners receive increased pay and responsibility, gaining promotion within the workplace. The effective development of the broader skills of communication and teamwork increases employability. Progression onto higher qualifications is very good.

19. Learners say they feel very safe at work. They have thorough and detailed knowledge of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Almost all learners have good awareness of the findings and recommendations from high profile enquiries into failings within the care sector and understand the importance of applying the lessons learnt. Particularly good attention is paid to safe working practices and very good awareness of health and safety guidance and procedures. Learners have a thorough and effective understanding of the importance of safety and protection in health and social care settings. Health and safety is regularly and thoroughly reviewed and assessed. All learners develop a very good understanding of confidentiality and apply it very effectively in their work. Learners take very good care of themselves and those they work with.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

20. The quality of training and assessment is outstanding. Initial assessment is very thorough and focuses very well on establishing individual needs. It is used very effectively to plan learning and assessment. Training is very well matched to the needs and interests of each learner and employer. Portfolios are very well organised and contain very well presented work of a very high standard. Coaching is outstanding and assessors are inspirational. Systems for internal verification are very effective. Assessors ensure all learners are highly motivated to learn and provide well crafted, constructive and prompt feedback on their progress, next steps and ways to improve. Equality and diversity are promoted exceptionally well. Assessors have a thorough and very effective approach to raising learners' awareness of differences and inequalities. This includes the topics that are critical to high standards and values in care.
21. Partnerships with employers are outstanding, and involvements with regional and national sector bodies are very effective. Employers are very enthusiastic and engaged very effectively in planning and reviewing learning, which motivates learners. Assessors provide employers with very effective advice on new developments and guidance within the sector. Assessors have vast experience, and outstanding subject knowledge and sector skills. Assessment is particularly effective and learners look forward to meeting their assessor. Learning is valued highly and is made very interesting and worthwhile for learners and employers. All learners and their employers have very good awareness of the level of progress they are making and what they have to do to improve. Individual learning plans contain challenging and detailed targets.

22. Support and guidance for all learners is outstanding. Arrangements to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. Assessors are very effective at ensuring learners receive sufficient support to overcome barriers and problems. This provides all learners with significantly improved confidence and helps them achieve their qualification. Assessors offer very effective careers guidance, which motivates learners to plan for their career and become more ambitious.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

23. Very strong leadership sets a clear and well-planned direction underpinned by robust business planning and targets. Staff are involved fully in forming the strategic direction of the company, which is closely matched to national priorities. Staff are highly motivated. Employers confirm the very high professional standards of DHA and use them as their provider of first choice.
24. Senior managers closely monitor programme performance. Annual appraisals set clear measurable targets clearly focused on achieving business plan targets and improving programme performance. A timetable of team and individual meetings provides an effective structure to monitor learners' progress, share good practice and improve the quality of provision.
25. Arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. A strategic decision to only recruit assessors with considerable management experience in health and social care ensures a high prioritisation of safeguarding for learners. Clear policies and procedures complement staff clarity about roles and responsibilities. All relevant staff have completed enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks with results held in a central register. Staff have regular training appropriate for their positions and aspects of safeguarding feature in all team meetings. The management of health and safety is strong. Particularly good working arrangements with employers and other partners help to ensure a high level of safety awareness. Assessors are home based and procedures to support lone working are highly effective. Policies on bullying and harassment are effective. Employer network meetings and newsletters are used very well to inform and update them on developments in safeguarding.
26. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. A very strong culture of mutual respect and understanding permeates through all aspects of the company. Data are systematically analysed and show no underperformance by any of the cohorts. Support for learners with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is very strong. For example, DHA entered into a very successful agreement with a company specialising in providing care for deaf persons. Many of the learners were also deaf. Very effective support arrangements were developed and implemented. Subsequently, all of the 22 learners successfully completed their level 3 qualification. The proportion of male learners is significantly higher than is usual for the sector and their success rates are well above the national average.

27. Staff training in equality and diversity is an integral part of monthly team meetings with additional training to meet specific aspects such as dyslexia and dementia. Learners show a high level of understanding of equality and diversity and can readily use examples from their workplaces during discussions with assessors. Complaints are managed promptly and effectively. Celebration of learners' success is good.
28. The views of employers and learners are used very effectively to promote improvement and provide high quality provision. A thorough organisational and training needs analysis ensures a carefully constructed programme to meet the needs of both learners and employers. The company uses a very good range of methods to obtain the views of both employers and learners. Arrangements to communicate the improvement actions to employers and learners that have been taken as a result of this feedback are very good.
29. Each part of the learners' experience is quality assured through a rigorous process of observation against expected standards and used to bring about improvements, benefiting learners with a very high-quality learning experience. However, the observation of training overly focuses on the assessor rather than the learner.
30. Resources are particularly well used to provide outstanding value for money. Success rates are high for all cohorts of learners. Senior managers closely monitor financial budgets. Assessors are very highly qualified and experienced, and provide a high quality learning experience. Resources to support learning are good and the majority of learners have access to learning through technology. Senior managers closely monitor the implementation of a well developed sustainability policy. For example, all new lease cars used by assessors are now hybrid models.

Information about the inspection

31. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality 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, and data on learners and their achievement.
32. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at surveys learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed training and coaching sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in health, public services and care.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Dawn Hodge Associates Ltd**

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		
Part-time learners	196	196
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Capacity to improve	1	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<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	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1	
Leadership and management	1	1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<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?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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