

# Focus Training and Development Limited

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 58519

**Name of lead inspector:** Shahram Safavi HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 1 October 2010

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Oakwood House  
82 Eastmount Road  
Darlington  
DL1 1LA

**Telephone number:** 01325 355633

## Information about the provider

1. Focus Training and Development Limited (FTD) is an independent training provider established in 2001. FTD recruits its learners from all regions and operates from its office in Darlington.
2. The Skills Funding Agency funds approximately 65% of the company's business. FTD has held contracts for Train to Gain provision in health, public services and care, transportation operations and maintenance, preparation for life and work, and business, administration and law. Currently the company provides Train to Gain programmes in transportation operations and maintenance. Most Train to Gain learners are self-employed drivers. During the week of inspection, most learners were from a minority ethnic background and very few were women.
3. The managing director, who is responsible for strategic planning and business development, leads the company. Each of the five managers in FTD has a defined area of responsibility: corporate services, training operations, recruitment, employability programmes, and business development. There are a further ten full-time staff, two of whom are administrators and one an employment adviser; the remainder are tutors who also have assessment responsibilities.

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2009/10
<b>Adult learner provision:</b>	
Learning for qualifications	310 learners
<b>Employer provision:</b>	
Train to Gain	402 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		3
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		2
Equality and diversity		2
Subject Areas		Grade
Transportation operations and maintenance		2

## Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of the company is good. Most learners complete their qualifications, develop good skills and improve their confidence. The quality of provision, and teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is well structured. In National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) background knowledge sessions, tutors use a range of learning activities which learners find interesting and beneficial. However, in these sessions, tutors do not focus on the progress of individual learners sufficiently and some learners wait too long for others to complete their work. Tutors do not sufficiently challenge learners who are more experienced or have better developed literacy and numeracy skills.
5. FTD responds well to the training needs and interests of learners. The company has developed good partnerships with employers and other providers to improve the provision. The company provides training flexibly, at times and in venues convenient to learners. FTD supports learners to stay on their courses and achieve effectively. However, the company's arrangements for learners with literacy and numeracy support needs are insufficient.
6. The managing director and the managers provide good leadership and management. They monitor learners' achievements well and take good actions if any issues arise. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and learners use

their knowledge about safeguarding in their dealings with their customers. There is a good ethos of promoting equality and diversity, although tutors do not record in detail learners' responses to equality and diversity questions during the progress review meetings.

7. The company has a clear knowledge of its strengths and areas to improve. Its arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of provision are satisfactory.

## Main findings

- Success rates are good. The overall success rates in transportation operations and maintenance for 2008/09 and 2009/10 were high and significantly above national rates. Success rates in preparation for life and work programmes were also very high and above national rates. However, success rates in health, public services and care for 2009/10 were very low.
- Learners use the knowledge gained through their training effectively and improve their working practices. Many learners increase their self-confidence and gain a useful insight into different types of passenger transport businesses.
- Learners feel very safe and demonstrate a good awareness of safe working practices. Tutors discuss health and safety, and safeguarding confidently at induction and reinforce the topics appropriately during teaching, assessment and reviews.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners benefit from a good range of teaching activities, such as coaching and learning from other learners' experiences, during NVQ background knowledge sessions. However, tutors do not use initial assessment appropriately to plan for individual learning and fail to challenge a small minority of learners sufficiently.
- The provision is very responsive to the needs of learners and employers. FTD plans the venues and delivery timetables well to meet the needs of employers and learners. FTD provides additional programmes in public transportation for learners who wish to gain other relevant qualifications.
- FTD uses its well-established partnerships to develop the provision. The links between FTD, the local authorities and employers result in good sharing of specialist information for the benefit of learners, for example local authorities' policies and guidance.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. FTD offers appropriate guidance on further training options for learners. Staff are very sensitive to learners' needs. Tutors direct learners who require literacy and numeracy support to other providers. However, FTD does not check whether learners are accessing such support. Arrangements for supporting these learners are insufficient.
- Managers use data well to monitor learners' progress and success rates. They take effective action when performance issues arise. The strong teamwork, good communication and a consultative management approach, contribute effectively to improvements in the provision. FTD's strategic and operational planning are good.

- Arrangements to safeguard learners and staff are good. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. All staff are suitably vetted and trained. Staff take appropriate actions to deal with incidents and have good links to local agencies for support.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Analysis of the relative performance of different groups of learners is thorough. Tutors use a range of good examples in NVQ background knowledge sessions to engage learners' interest in equality and diversity. However, tutors do not record in sufficient detail answers to questions about equality and diversity asked during learners' progress reviews.
- FTD has satisfactory arrangements in place to improve the provision. Learners' and employers' views are appropriately collected and changes are made in response. The self-assessment process is effective and leads to improvement. However, managers do not systematically monitor the quality of all the training processes and the recording of quality assurance activities is not sufficiently clear.

### **What does Focus Training and Development Limited need to do to improve further?**

- Make better use of information from initial assessment to plan learning that will meet individual needs during NVQ background knowledge sessions; develop additional activities to challenge learners of different ability levels appropriately.
- Better record learners' responses to questions about equality and diversity during progress reviews, and use this information to identify areas for further development.
- Improve the monitoring of the quality of all key training processes by ensuring that each activity is evaluated separately against clear standards and expectations. Record this information accurately.
- Ensure that all learners have effective access to literacy and numeracy support and closely monitor whether they take up this support.

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

- the good support from tutors
- the convenient location of the training centre
- the opportunity to gain a qualification.

**What learners would like to see improved:**

- the opportunity to have additional learning activities during NVQ background knowledge sessions while waiting for other learners to complete their activities.

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

- the very good communication and support
- the good pace of improvements.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- no improvements identified.

## **Main inspection findings**

### **Capacity to make and sustain improvement**

**Grade 2**

8. FTD has good capacity to make and sustain improvements. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates on Train to Gain are high and well above national rates. The proportion of learners who complete within the agreed timescales is also high. The monitoring of learners' progress is effective. Leadership and management are good. The company has taken effective action to remedy the low success rates of its health, public services and care learners, and now does not offer this provision.
9. The self-assessment process is inclusive and leads to improvements. Plans for improvements are very clear and reviewed often. The self-assessment report is sufficiently detailed and critical, and it broadly reflects the inspection findings. FTD is very clear about what it needs to do to improve further. However, its quality systems do not sufficiently monitor all the separate aspects of the training process and monitoring records are insufficiently clear.

### **Outcomes for learners**

**Grade 2**

10. Success rates over the last two years of the programme have been consistently high and are significantly above national averages. The proportion of learners who complete within the agreed timescales is also high and above national averages. Success rates for preparation for life and work learners are very high and significantly above national averages. The majority of learners are from minority ethnic groups and most achieve in line with their peers. The overall success rate for the 10 learners in health, public services and care in 2009/10 was very low. The company does not now offer this provision.
11. Learners make good progress while on programme. Many learners report positively about their improved self-confidence and the social skills gained while completing their qualification.
12. Learners feel very safe. Learners quickly identify safe working practices which are discussed and developed within specific units of the programme. Learners use this information well in their work within the road passenger transport industry.

### **The quality of provision**

**Grade 3**

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The programme is well planned. Initial assessment, induction and NVQ background theory sessions are completed over three days. NVQ background knowledge sessions are planned well with clear aims for the session and links into previous learning. Tutors use a range of teaching and learning styles to engage the learners. They are particularly

effective in using the learners' driving experiences to establish and develop their understanding of topics. The use of practical examples is good, such as discussions on health and safety hazards when using de-icing fluids or commercial cleaning products.

14. Initial assessment, including literacy and numeracy tests and a skills scan, are completed during induction. In background knowledge lessons the tutors do not use the results of the initial assessment sufficiently to plan activities for learners who are more experienced drivers or who have more developed literacy and numeracy skills. A small number of learners have to wait too long for others to complete their learning activities.
15. Assessment is frequent and flexible to suit learners' needs, with assessments agreed around learners' shift patterns. Internal verification is satisfactory. Standardisation meetings are regular. Progress reviews are frequent with targets set for the next session. However, the discussions to check each learner's understanding of health and safety, and equality and diversity are not sufficiently recorded.
16. The programme is very effective in meeting the needs and interest of learners and employers. FTD responds well to learner feedback. For example, it now delivers the background knowledge element of the programme over two-and-a-half days instead of shorter sessions over a longer period of time. While the qualification is mandatory for taxi drivers, learners confirm that they enjoy their return to learning and that their skills and knowledge are developed to meet current industrial standards.
17. FTD works effectively with employers to develop its provision and to ensure that the programme covers all aspects which are important to both the employers and the learners. Programmes are reviewed with specific reference to local council requirements. Formal and informal feedback from both learners and employers is used well to improve the programmes.
18. FTD provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for learners. Staff offer appropriate guidance on further training options for learners. They are very sensitive to learners' needs, many of whom have had little successful education previously. Tutors direct learners who require literacy and numeracy support to other providers. However, FTD does not monitor whether learners are accessing this support and arrangements for supporting these learners are insufficient.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

19. FTD's strategic and operational planning are good. Staff, especially the managers, are fully involved in strategic planning and responsibilities are clearly defined. Strategic planning leads to a clear development plan, targets and milestones, which managers systematically review. Targets and progress towards them are displayed clearly for all staff to see. Managers make good use



of data and management information to monitor learners' progress and take effective actions when performance issues arise.

20. Teamwork and communication are very effective. Frequent and effective team meetings, informal discussions and newsletters keep staff and learners well informed about developments and priorities. The managing director leads the company through a consultative approach to management. Support for staff development through coaching and training is effective.
21. Arrangements to safeguard learners are good. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. All staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. FTD has developed appropriate training to ensure that staff have a good understanding of how to protect themselves and their learners. One of the managers is a designated officer who liaises with the regional safeguarding board. Tutors explain and discuss safeguarding matters particularly well during the training sessions. Learners report that they find these discussions very relevant to their work and they make good use of their improved knowledge and understanding.
22. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. FTD provides an inclusive culture and an open, friendly and supportive environment for learners. Staff receive regular training on equality and diversity and they show a good understanding of learners' barriers to progress. The company is very effective in attracting, supporting and retaining under-represented groups. Tutors use good examples to demonstrate the relevance of equality and diversity and to engage learners' interest. Learners from different cultural backgrounds report good working relationships and support each other appropriately. However, the tutors do not sufficiently record learners' responses during discussions about equality and diversity.
23. FTD makes good use of learners' and employers' views to improve the provision. Employers highly value their partnership with the company and make frequent suggestions to bring about improvements. Learners use their regular contact with tutors to discuss any concerns they have.
24. FTD has an effective self-assessment process. The quality improvement plan, which has recently been reviewed, is effective in bringing about improvements. FTD has a range of quality assurance activities. There is a clear audit plan for training processes. However, quality assurance arrangements do not sufficiently monitor and record the quality of the different training processes. Observation of teaching and learning does not sufficiently focus on learning and is not sufficiently evaluative. Monitoring arrangements for other teaching and learning processes, such as progress reviews, are unclear.
25. Value for money is good. All staff have appropriate experience in training as well as specialist knowledge of the vocational area.

## Information about the inspection

26. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector, 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 and data on learners and their achievement over the period of the contract.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed about the provider. They also 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)****Focus Training and Development Limited**

**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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Employer responsive</b>
<b>Approximate number of learners on programme</b>		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	89	89
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
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	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
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?	3	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	N/A	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
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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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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