

Abis Resources Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58413

Name of lead inspector: Neil Edwards HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 September 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Abis Resources Ltd, also known as Abis College (Abis) has training and administrative facilities in Bow, East London. Until recently, the company was based in East Ham. Abis started trading in 2007 and received a Train to Gain contract in 2008. Abis delivers training for employed learners in health and social care to an average of 110 learners each year. In addition to this, the company provides private training to the care sector and private training in management, business administration, information technology (IT) and customer service.

2. Abis currently have 26 learners in training, funded by the Skills Funding Agency under Train to Gain. Most learners are from minority ethnic groups. Learners work in care homes, care centres or agencies specialising in domiciliary care throughout East London, most of these being in, or near, Newham or Tower Hamlets. Learners work towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 or level 3 in health and social care. Most learners who receive additional learning support complete level 1 qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy. Training takes place in the workplace with some off-the-job training at the centre.

3. The chief executive owns and manages Abis Resources Ltd. She is supported by three full-time staff who provide training and assessment and look after the administration. The company also contracts with self-employed staff who are responsible for teaching, assessing and internal verification. Abis recruits learners through employer contacts and recommendations by previous learners. Most learners come from the local borough of Newham, which is one of the highest areas of social deprivation in England. There is currently major regeneration work in this area, which has created large numbers of employment opportunities, including provision for the 2012 Olympic Games. This is the first inspection of Abis Resources Ltd.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain	129 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Health and social care	2

Overall effectiveness

4. Provision at Abis Resources Ltd is good. The majority of learners complete their courses successfully and gain their qualifications within the time planned. Learners demonstrate good health and social care skills and gain in confidence while on their course. Learners enjoy their learning and feel safe at work and at the centre.
5. Training and assessment of learners' work are satisfactory. Learning resources at the centre are particularly good and well used. There is careful monitoring of learners' progress. Progress reviews are regular and mostly thorough, although short-term target setting for a small proportion of learners is perfunctory. Learning support is good. Staff know their learners well and they are responsive to each learner's needs.
6. Leadership and management are good. Partnerships with employers are strong and staff make good use of these links to ensure they provide appropriate courses to meet the needs of learners. Good use is made of learners' and employers' feedback to inform the self-assessment process. The chief executive and her staff take prompt action when they identify the need to improve. The development plan identifies clearly the actions needed to make improvements, although insufficient actions are identified to improve or maintain strengths.

Actions in the development plan have no identified completion dates or named responsible persons.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates consistently exceed national averages for all learners. Success rates in literacy and numeracy are outstanding at 100%, although there is insufficient challenge in the level of literacy and numeracy qualifications in a small number of cases.
- Standards of work are high. Learners demonstrate good practical skills and knowledge of the sector. They complete a wide range of additional short courses with their employers to enhance their further employment prospects. Learners have a good understanding of the individual needs of their clients and they feel safe.
- Learners progress well and many move into positions of responsibility. Learners are keen to progress into careers, such as nursing, or onto courses leading to higher-level qualifications.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lesson planning is mostly good and resources at the centre are good. However, in some learning materials the text is too small and too wordy making them difficult for learners to read.
- Assessment is clearly recorded with good feedback given to learners, although the number of assessments in the workplace is limited. Good assessment planning ensures learners complete their qualifications on time. Initial assessment is thorough and learners receive good learning support.
- Links with employers are good and help to support learners in accessing relevant training. However, partnerships with other local providers, such as those offering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, are not fully developed.
- Advice and guidance are good and learners value highly the individual support they receive. There are detailed learning plans, although in a small proportion of reviews short-term target setting is weak.
- Leadership and management are good. The chief executive provides clear strategic direction that recognises the potential threats caused by future funding cuts and she has planned accordingly. Staff morale is high and Abis provides good value for money. Safeguarding arrangements and equality of opportunities are satisfactory.
- Actions taken to improve the provision are good. The self-assessment process has improved and Abis uses accurate data to inform provision planning and development. Observations of teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there is insufficient focus on the learning processes.

What does Abis Resources Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all learners who receive additional learning support are placed on appropriate level courses in literacy and numeracy.
- Further develop partnerships to ensure appropriate support for those learners with under-developed spoken English.
- Share good practices between staff to ensure all short-term targets set for learners at reviews are clear and measurable.
- Increase the focus in lesson observations on the effectiveness of learning.
- Review learning materials to ensure they are fit for purpose and easy to read for all learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good individual support
- meeting other learners and sharing knowledge
- training that is fun and enjoyable
- the good facilities at the training centre
- the kind and friendly staff
- being able to learn while working.

What learners would like to see improved:

- better learning resources to support teaching.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- flexibility in assessment arrangements
- developing courses to meet business needs
- good communication from Abis about learners' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more assessment of learners' practical work.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. Abis has demonstrated a good record of taking action that leads to improvements for learners. Learners complete their courses successfully and success rates have been consistently above national averages since the start of the contract.
8. Abis places a good focus on quality assurance. Strategic and operational management is good and the chief executive knows well the strengths of the provision and the areas for improvement. Planning of staff training is thorough and this encompasses equality, diversity, and safeguarding. A recent relocation of premises has resulted in improved accommodation and facilities.
9. The self-assessment process is inclusive and effective utilisation is made of the views of staff and users. Abis makes good use of data to inform improvements. The current, second self-assessment report is more evaluative and self-critical than the company's first report. Self-assessment grades identified broadly agree with those awarded through inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Success rates are high. Current in-year data for 2009/10 indicate timely success rates remain high at around 81%, although these have dropped from 88% in 2008/09. Currently at 97%, overall success rates have remained particularly high and well above national averages for the last three years. Differences between success rates for male and female learners and learners from different minority ethnic backgrounds are small. Success rates for literacy and numeracy qualifications are outstanding at 100%, although a small proportion of learners taking level 1 qualifications would have been more suited to level 2.
11. Learners enjoy their learning. They make good progress towards their qualifications and demonstrate good practical skills. Attendance and punctuality for courses at the centre are good. Learners have good knowledge and understanding of their work and they are able to be better carers, which enhances their employability. Training improves learners' opportunities for promotion and many learners gain promotion during training or after they complete.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners enjoy their theory training, which helps to improve their practical skills. Lesson planning is mostly good and good use is made of resources such as the interactive whiteboard. However, feedback from teachers on learners' written English in assignments is

insufficient and some learning materials are difficult to read for learners whose first language is not English.

13. Assessment is fair and well planned to ensure learners complete their qualifications on time. Recording of assessments is clear and feedback to learners is detailed. Reviews of learners' progress are thorough although, in a small number of cases, short-term targets are not clear or measurable.
14. Arrangements to meet the needs of learners and employers are good and assessments and training are planned flexibly to meet the demands of business. Links with employers are good and Abis' understanding of the sector's needs is good. Most learners complete a wide range of additional qualifications through arrangements made by their employers. These include courses in health and safety, first aid and specialist care. Partnerships with other providers, such as those offering ESOL courses, are underdeveloped.
15. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Initial assessment is thorough and learning plans are clear and detailed. Personal support for learners is good. Learners with literacy and numeracy needs get adequate support, although there are insufficient links made with the main programme.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good. The chief executive communicates well with staff about strategic planning and improvements to the provision. All staff have a good understanding of the local needs and priorities, and they have clear plans for future expansion of the provision. Value for money is good.
17. Data to track learners' progress and to identify trends and areas for improvement are effectively used. There is clear prioritisation of staff training to meet the needs of the organisation and of individuals. This includes recent update training on equality and diversity and health and safety. Most staff are qualified assessors and new staff are working towards a basic teaching qualification.
18. Arrangements to safeguard learners and to promote awareness of safeguarding issues are satisfactory. There is appropriate attention given to health and safety and learners value the security arrangements at the training environment. Checks undertaken at reviews ensure learners are safe at work.
19. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Abis provides effective support for learners from a wide variety of racial and religious backgrounds. Training given recently to all staff ensures they have a good understanding of equality and diversity matters. The company reviews and updates its policies and procedures effectively and there is reference to relevant legislation. Staff and learner handbooks make appropriate reference to equality of opportunity, although the learner handbook is unnecessarily detailed. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. There is no significant

variation in success rates between learners from different groups. Male participation on the programme is high for the sector.

20. Self-assessment is thorough and inclusive. Effective use is made of feedback from learners and employers to make improvements and to inform the self-assessment process. There is a strong culture of quality improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are good and these include clear processes for the observation of teaching and learning. Feedback to staff on their performance is clear, although there is insufficient focus on the learning processes. Internal verification is thorough. Abis' second self-assessment report is clear and evaluative. This has improved significantly from the previous report.

Information about the inspection

21. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by Abis Resources Ltd.'s chief executive, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plan, comments from the funding body, and data on learners and their achievement over the last three years.
22. Inspectors used interviews, observations and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning and support sessions and reviewed evidence of assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Abis Resources 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			
Full-time learners	26	26	
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	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?	2		
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?	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>	n/a		
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?	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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