

PDM Training and Consultancy Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53819

Name of lead inspector: Deavon Baker-Oxley HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 March 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd (PDM) has operated as a business since 2000. PDM is a registered company with limited liability, employing around 90 full and part-time staff. The company provides a range of training and consultancy services to both the public and private sectors.
2. PDM is a national training provider offering training in health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; preparation for life and work and business, administration and law. This training is funded through a contract with the national Skills Funding Agency.
3. Currently the largest numbers of learners are on the road passenger vehicle driving National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), the driving goods vehicles and the Skills for Life programmes. At the time of inspection there were 449 on programme. The majority of training and assessment is carried out in the learners' workplace by PDM assessors. All learners are in employment.
4. A senior manager has overall responsibility and is supported by a number of middle managers who have day-to-day responsibilities for the programmes. PDM's head office is in Andover. However, its training and learners are located across the country from Devon to North Yorkshire.
5. PDM provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - Ministry of Defence
6. The following organisation provides training on behalf of PDM:
 - Drivers Direct.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners at Period 8 in 2010/11
Employer responsive provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	444 learners 5 apprentices

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	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1
Preparation for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

7. PDM's overall provision is good. Current learners in all programmes are on target to achieve their qualifications within their planned end dates. Many learners develop self-confidence and enjoy and value their learning. They are able to apply effectively skills and knowledge gained to enhance their working and private lives. Learners' awareness and understanding of health and safety are very good and all learners feel safe.
8. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with the use of very effective individual coaching for many learners on the road passenger vehicle drivers NVQ programme. However, some Skills for Life sessions do not make learning relevant enough by linking it to learners' work; tutors place an over reliance on general workbooks and do not make enough use of information technology to support learning.
9. PDM has clear and effective strategies in place to ensure continuous quality improvement, that contribute to improving learners' outcomes. However, it's target to develop skills in Skills for Life for all staff has not yet been met. The safeguarding of learners is good and well promoted by the provider. The

promotion of equality and diversity is good and learners understand how equality and diversity affects them.

Main findings

- Learners' work is of a high standard and current learners are making good progress. Outcomes for learners on driving programmes in 2009/10 are outstanding; success rates are significantly above national rates. These learners gain excellent opportunities for improving their employability. Outcomes for Skills for Life learners have risen steadily to a satisfactory level.
- The promotion of health, safety and safe working practices is very good. These aspects are reinforced well during assessment and progress reviews.
- Coaching, learning and assessment for drivers are outstanding; training in small groups is excellent. Thorough assessment uses a wide variety of new technologies to record learner performance. Good, extensive questioning checks and expands learners' knowledge.
- In the Skills for Life, coaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Some learning targets lack detail. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements although some minor inconsistencies remain in one region.
- PDM is highly responsive to employers' training needs and learners' aspirations. Employers highly value the effectiveness of training in increasing business opportunities.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Very flexible contact with trainers, often in unsocial hours, motivates learners and helps them progress. Learners benefit from support from peer mentors who have successfully completed the programme.
- PDM has developed as a well-respected provider of comprehensive training. The company has a strong focus on developing its staff. However, its Skills for Life strategy is not fully established. The target for all staff to complete an additional Skills for Life qualification has not been met.
- The provider exceeds the government's current requirements for safeguarding. PDM has focused well on developing and implementing a highly robust safeguarding strategy.
- PDM promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good. A comprehensive strategy and action plan allows PDM to embed equality of opportunity in all aspects of the learners' experience.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good with excellent arrangements for collecting learner and employer feedback. The highly effective monthly managers' meetings generate a wide range of improvement initiatives. However, PDM does not set individualised targets for each region. Performance baselines are not always highlighted in the action plans in order clearly measure progress.

What does PDM Training and Consultancy Limited need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement the Skills for Life strategy by ensuring that all staff meet the requirement for an additional Skills for Life qualification and developing their skills in setting focused targets and linking Skills for Life to vocational areas, to promote effective learning and to raise outcomes.
- Set and monitor individualised performance targets for each region to ensure consistency of outcomes, teaching, learning and procedures across all regions. Strengthen the management focus on improving lower performing areas.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- assessors who are knowledgeable, flexible and fit in with work and shift patterns
- very good individual tutoring and help with dyslexia
- gaining confidence and improved knowledge of health and safety and safeguarding.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the range of heavy goods training vehicles to include class 1
- a shorter Skills for Life course with intensive training and more visits.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- drivers' improved safety practice when driving and dealing with passengers
- no disruption to drivers' work and good fit in with company's operation
- PDM's quality of service and customer feedback
- an improved company profile once drivers are qualified
- good company to work with.

What employers would like to see improved:

- celebration of drivers' success.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Outcomes for learners have steadily risen. They were outstanding in 2009/10 for drivers, while in Skills for Life they have risen significantly year-on-year and are now satisfactory. PDM has maintained improvement since its previous inspection during a period of substantial increase in the numbers of learners. PDM sets challenging targets; its good strategic vision places a keen focus on learner outcomes.
11. Quality improvement arrangements are good. The excellent system to collect feedback, and a well-resourced quality department, ensure staff at all levels are involved in improvements. A new review system resulting from feedback has improved the monitoring of learner progress for PDM and employers. Inspectors agreed with most of the self-assessment report's identified strengths and areas for improvement. The report focuses well on the learners' and employers' experience. The resulting action plan is realistic; it has led to improvements and an increase in learner outcomes.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Outcomes for learners on the transportation operations and maintenance programmes in 2009/10 are outstanding with high, and improving, overall and success rates within the planned time. The rates in 2009/10 are 13 percentage points above the national rates. Outcomes for Skills for Life learners have risen steadily to a satisfactory level. Learners' work is of a high standard and current learners are making good progress with no marked variation in outcomes for different groups of learners.
13. All learners gain excellent opportunities for improving their employability skills and increased self-confidence and self-esteem. For many learners this is their first recognised qualification. Learners are motivated and enjoy their learning.
14. All learners feel safe and are clearly aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety. The company's promotion of health, safety and safe working practices is very good. Staff reinforce these aspects effectively during learners' assessment and progress reviews.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching, learning and assessment are overall good. Staff plan their lessons carefully and provide very varied and interesting learning activities. In driving programmes, effective and highly-customised individualised training makes good use of occupationally-specific skills. Learners are extremely well coached, have good individual support for learning and actively engage in sessions. Induction is good, informative, memorable and identifies learners' needs, prior learning and learning styles. Trainers make good use of well-developed and

high-quality training materials. However, some Skills for Life sessions are too general with an over-reliance on workbooks. Information technology is insufficiently used. Most learners in driving programmes are reluctant to take up the Skills for Life support offered.

16. Assessment is comprehensive and robust. The planning is thorough and, for learners on driving programmes, uses an exceptionally wide range of assessment methods including electronic, video and mobile technologies to support and record specific occupational skills and performance. Extensive oral questioning is used to check and extend learners' work-related knowledge and understanding. Most learners receive highly detailed feedback reports that contain specific targets for improvement and progression, but these are insufficiently detailed in Skills for Life. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements although some minor inconsistencies remain in one region.
17. PDM is outstanding in meeting employers' training needs and learners' aspirations. Employers' driving training requirements are met exactly. This has increased customer satisfaction; contributed towards motivating drivers; reduced staff turnover and generally raised levels of professionalism for the sector. Employers highly value the benefits of training in increasing business opportunities and winning new contracts.
18. Partnership arrangements are satisfactory. Links with employers are good; they are satisfactory with the local colleges of further education who provide specialist training where needed. PDM is particularly good at providing employers with a comprehensive monthly briefing about learners' progress, achievements and new learning opportunities.
19. Care, guidance and support are good. Contact with trainers is especially flexible, fitting with varied and often unsocial work patterns. The monitoring of this contact is meticulous, ensuring no learner is missed. This motivates and helps learners progress and, for many, this is their first formal qualification. Most employers support learners well, giving them time to complete their qualification. Learners benefit from peer mentoring support from those who have previously achieved the qualification. Initial advice and guidance are thorough with learners appropriately placed on the right level programmes.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Good leadership and strategic management have developed PDM into a very effective training provider. From the identification and analysis of employers' training needs to the design, delivery and evaluation of the training programmes, PDM meets the skills and commercial needs of employers particularly well. Some training packages are recognised as setting the standard within a particular industry. Since the previous inspection, PDM's training offer has grown considerably and employers can access a wide range of programmes spanning over 100 qualifications, including short courses in customer service and disability awareness that add value to their main NVQ programmes.

Approximately 40% of PDM's current business is made up of employers that have a well-established relationship with the company.

21. The very inclusive and approachable culture promoted by the senior team at PDM has allowed staff and management to develop close working relationships. Staff participate in many communication events that allow them to highlight new business opportunities and suggest ideas for improvement. Effective development activities are linked to needs identified during the annual staff appraisal. However, whilst qualified to deliver training, not all staff have met the PDM development plan target to achieve an additional Skills for Life qualification. Staff turnover is generally low. The company places a great focus on promoting its staff as part of its succession planning; many develop as managers.
22. PDM's clear and well-informed strategy enables managers to translate the strategic aims into key performance indicators. However, the organisation does not set specific, individualised targets for each region. Performance baselines are not always highlighted in the action plans to measure progress. Managers carefully monitor and review their region's performance and regularly update senior managers about their contribution towards the strategic aims. The strategy has identified the need to further expand into apprenticeship programmes and well-advanced plans are in place to deliver these qualifications to a good standard.
23. Since the previous inspection, PDM has made a substantial investment in resources that enhance the learning experience. Staff have access to mobile assessment units on trailers and all-terrain vehicles to support off-road training. The information technology structure has been further developed helping assessors to work more effectively at closer points to the learners. PDM is trialling a comprehensive set of online learning tools for all its learners. Financial management is strong and the provider delivers good value for money.
24. The provider has focused well in developing its safeguarding strategy. PDM exceeds the government's current requirements for safeguarding and works very effectively with the Ministry of Defence to safeguard its young soldier learners with a strong emphasis on health and safety. PDM has been very successful in sharing its safeguarding knowledge with learners to increase their awareness. For example, public services driving learners display a good understanding of how to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults who use their services.
25. PDM promotes equality of opportunity and diversity well. A comprehensive strategy and action plan allows PDM to embed equality of opportunity in all aspects of the learners' experience. A comprehensive workbook helps assessors to further develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity topics at their induction and through different stages of their programme. However, some of the Skills for Life learners have only a basic understanding of equality of opportunity. Staff have recently taken part in the creation of marketing

materials that promote diversity and cultural difference. PDM has also utilised its own knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity by creating new training programmes for learners such as disability awareness. Last year the provider began rigorous analysis of data to identify any differences in achievement across specific groups of learners; no differences between groups have been identified.

Subject areas

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

Grade 1

Context

26. Currently, 366 learners are on Train to Gain driving programmes. Of these, 60 are working towards NVQ at level 2 in driving goods vehicle (DGV) and carry goods vehicle (CGV) and 250 on NVQ at level 2 road passenger vehicle drivers (RPVD) programmes. The remaining 56 are working towards NVQ at level 3 in driving goods vehicle. All learners are employed or self-employed, mainly in the taxi and haulage business. Training and assessment are all on-the-job and take place throughout England.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners in 202009/10 were outstanding with high and improving overall and success rates within the planned time. Rates improved from 64% in 2007/08 to an outstanding 94% for RPVD and from 43% to 95% for goods vehicle drivers. Both are now 13 percentage points above national rates, while learner numbers have increased significantly from 438 in 2007/08 to 1,787 in 202009/10.
- Learners' work is of a very high standard, developing and reinforcing vocational skills and knowledge. Learners have good customer focus, greater understanding of legislation and improved driving techniques giving them excellent opportunities for improving employability and promotion prospects. The skills and knowledge acquired raises their confidence and status to become self-employed and win driving contracts. Taxi drivers welcome the opportunity to gain an additional qualification.
- The promotion of health, safety and safe working practices is very good. Learners have improved understanding and continually review their safe working practices when with vulnerable customers. Learners adopt safe working routines, such as those related to handling, lifting and the security of loads. These aspects are subject to ongoing discussion and reinforcement during assessment and progress reviews.
- Coaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Excellent training and assessment is individual or in small groups with very experienced staff. Trainers for taxi driving make good use of stimulating and high-quality training workbooks, which link closely to online assessments. Very effective individualised training meets the needs of experienced drivers, who have no formal qualifications.
- Learners enjoy their programmes. Induction is informative and prepares them well. Initial assessment is highly effective in identifying occupational skills. However, the majority of learners identified with literacy, numeracy or language needs rarely take up the specialist support available.

- Assessment is thorough, using a wide variety of assessment methods to meet differing learning preferences. Electronic, video and mobile technologies capture learner performance of specific skills. Good, extensive oral questioning checks and extends learners' knowledge and understanding. Highly detailed feedback with specific targets improves learner progression. Internal verification is satisfactory although some minor inconsistencies remain in one region.
- PDM's response to employers' training needs and learners' aspirations to improve their economic future is outstanding. Employers' driving training requirements are met exactly; this has increased customer satisfaction, contributed towards motivating drivers and to a reduction in staff turnover. Employers highly value the training as a benefit to increasing business opportunities and winning new contracts over hard competition.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Contact with trainers is very flexible, fits in with varied and often unsocial work patterns, and motivates learners to progress. For many, this is their first formal qualification. Most employers support learners well, giving them work time to complete their qualification. Learners benefit from peer mentoring by those who have previously achieved the qualification.
- Leadership and management are good with high expectations for improving outcomes for learners. Managers have set challenging key performance indicators since the last inspection. Staff work very effectively to improve provision through bi-annual performance reviews as part of the performance management system. Management of provision delivered by the subcontractor is good.
- Extensive and varied staff development activities support improvements. These include outcomes of observations and appraisals as well as mandatory training on health and safety, equality and diversity, and safeguarding. Good staff training opportunities include subcontractor staff. Training staff are vocationally experienced with, or are studying for, teaching qualifications. Sharing best practice takes place at standardisation meetings and at the bi-annual two-day conferences.
- Safeguarding is good and learners' understanding is thorough. Learners know how to raise concerns with the designated officer. They have an excellent appreciation of safeguarding requirements while transporting vulnerable children and adults to schools and residential centres. The promotion of safeguarding is regularly reinforced at learner reviews, and by informative information guides and publicity materials displayed at employers' premises.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are good with no differences in learner outcomes. Learners are well informed, with a continuous focus on equality and diversity throughout the programme. Training materials are diverse and representative. Learners are aware of how to deal with bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Quality improvement and self-assessment practices are good. Systems and processes are planned logically, with detailed quality improvement action plans monitored monthly. Observation of teaching, induction and professional discussions are thorough and identify areas for improvement. However, learner

progress reviews are not observed. Self-assessment is accurate and well informed with contributions from staff, the subcontractor, learners and employers.

What does PDM Training and Consultancy Limited need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the high outcomes for learners.
- Encourage learners identified as requiring additional literacy, numeracy or language support to attend and benefit from the Skills for Life programme.
- Ensure the consistency of quality monitoring processes by checking that internal verification documentation is consistent across all regions and that learner progress reviews are incorporated into observation practices.

Preparation for Life and Work

Grade 3

Context

27. Currently, PDM has 39 learners on Train to Gain programmes in literacy and numeracy at levels 1 and 2. The majority of learners are male. Programmes take place at a wide range of venues, both within the workplace and in the community, with most courses currently delivered in York, Kingston upon Thames and Andover. Learners attend programmes during the day, in the evenings, at weekends and during night shifts, and all programmes are accredited.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall. Success rates within the planned time have improved from a low base to just below national averages. However, within the eastern region, success rates are particularly high for the current year. Learners are making good progress, are ambitious and hope to advance by gaining promotion or progressing on to other courses. Learners enjoy their courses.
- Learners and employers recognise that learners develop a greater understanding of literacy and numeracy leading to better planning at work. At home, learners are able to budget and calculate more effectively. Many learners have gained confidence in their skills and progressed to NVQs and/or to a promoted post. Learners are better able to communicate effectively with others and cope with their job roles.
- Learners feel safe and PDM places a strong emphasis on health and safety. All workplaces are checked by PDM and operate good security. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and some learners have carried out health and safety assignments as part of their learning.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sessions are well planned and meet the needs of individual learners well. In the better sessions, tutors link occupational practice to the curriculum well but other sessions are too general with an over reliance on workbooks. In these, learning materials used do not effectively link to the learners' work. Learners are coached well, have good individual support for learning and actively engage in sessions. Information technology is not used sufficiently in some sessions.
- Target setting is satisfactory but is often linked to curriculum topics rather than being occupationally relevant. Individual learning plans contain insufficient detail and written tutor feedback to inform learners' progress in lessons. Progress reviews detail workshops attended and workbooks completed as opposed to specific skills gained.
- Tutors are highly flexible in arranging visits that include evenings, weekends and early mornings to meet shift patterns. Programmes meet learners' development needs well. Although most employers allow learners to study in work time, in other cases sessions take place in learners' own time.

- Managers visit employers regularly and partnership working is good. Communications with employers are good. Tutors keep employers well briefed on learner progress.
- Pastoral support is satisfactory. Initial advice and guidance is thorough with learners appropriately placed on programmes following assessment. Tutors have established productive relationships with learners. They are supportive and aware of how to refer to specialist agencies if required. Learners who lack confidence receive regular support leading to success.
- Operational management is satisfactory. Communications are good and focus on improvement. The grading of observed teaching sessions is too high. The Skills for Life strategy is not yet fully implemented; whilst staff are qualified to deliver training, not all staff have met the PDM development plan requirement to have an additional Skills for Life qualification.
- PDM has a strong focus on safeguarding and learners understand well what it entails. Safeguarding is reinforced at each session and good attention is given to learners' understanding and application of health and safety in the workplace and the effective use of protective equipment and safeguarding.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Following the introduction of equality and diversity at induction, equality and diversity are consistently reinforced in lessons and throughout the programme. Staff have received training and are well informed on equality and diversity. However, some learners only have a basic understanding of its implications.
- All staff understand and feed into the self-assessment process. However, the report, whilst insufficiently critical, correctly identified the main areas for improvement identified by inspectors. Positive actions to improve aspects of the provision are taking place. For example, the monitoring of learner progress was recently reviewed and improved. PDM takes prompt action to tackle operational concerns as they arise, including acting on feedback from learners.

What does PDM Training and Consultancy Limited need to do to improve further?

- Raise overall and success rates within the planned time in literacy and numeracy, focusing on differences between regions, to ensure national consistently high rates.
- Ensure targets on individual learning plans are focused on specific skills needed by learners, so enabling them to fully concentrate on areas for development.
- Ensure learning materials reflect more closely the vocational focus of the learner to give greater interest to the learning process.
- Fully implement PDM's Skills for Life strategy to further improve teaching, learning and attainment by ensuring the sharing of good practice between qualified practitioners.

Information about the inspection

28. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Head of Training Operations Division, 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 bodies, 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.
29. 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)**PMD Training and Consultancy 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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	463	463
Part-time learners		
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?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	-	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-	
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?	1	
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>	-	
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?	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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