

A & R Training Services Limited

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. A & R Training Services Limited (A&RT) is a private work-based learning provider, established in 1992. In May 2009 the two former owners of A&RT retired and Woodspeen Training Plc took ownership of A&RT as the organisation's holding company. The key senior managers remained with A&RT after the takeover.
2. A&RT has training centres in Huddersfield (head office), Bradford, Halifax and Wakefield and employs approximately 100 members of staff across the organisation. A&RT operates predominantly across West Yorkshire delivering apprenticeships in childcare, care, and customer service as a prime contractor to the Skills Funding Agency. A&RT currently has a wide range of work placements based within the Calderdale, Kirklees, Bradford and Wakefield areas. Around 65% of A&RT's funding comes from the Skills Funding Agency.
3. The unemployment rate in Kirklees in 2010 was 8.6%, slightly lower than the rate for Yorkshire and the Humber but higher than the national rate of 7.7%. The proportion of school pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in Kirklees in 2010 was just under the national average. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of Kirklees' population from minority ethnic groups was 11.5%, compared with the national average of 9.1%. Most minority ethnic groups in Kirklees are of Asian or British Asian heritage.
4. A&RT provides training on behalf of the following organisations:
 - Aspire-I (foundation learning)
 - BEST Limited (employability skills)
 - Calderdale college (foundation learning)
 - Kirklees college (foundation learning)
 - Wakefield college (foundation learning)
 - West Yorkshire Learning Partnership (Train to Gain health and social care)
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of A&RT:
 - Joseph Priestley College (childcare)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Foundation learning	36 part-time learners 74 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	37 learners 622 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Early years and playwork	3
Preparation for life and work	3
Business, administration and law	3

Overall effectiveness

6. Current learners make satisfactory progress. The proportion that are successful has increased and is now close to the national average. The number of learners completing within their planned timescale has also improved but remains below the national average. Learners gain in confidence and self-esteem and develop satisfactory vocational skills. Many progress to further study although on Foundation Learning programmes the proportion of learners progressing to higher-level courses is low. A&RT has started to monitor and report the progress made by different groups of learners and has taken successful action to increase the performance of males.
7. Tutors know their learners well and offer high levels of personal support. Learners enjoy their classes and value their developing skills. However, lessons do not always meet the individual needs of all learners and tutors do not use technology sufficiently to enliven learning. Staff are suitably experienced but not all have yet achieved teaching qualifications. Assessment is well planned and arranged at times to suit learners and employers. Progress reviews are satisfactory and learners' progress is appropriately recorded although setting of targets is not always effective. The range of provision is good and is supported by very effective partnerships with schools.

8. A&RT leads and manages its provision satisfactorily. Senior managers are aware of training priorities and have ambitious plans for the organisation but some features of quality improvement are insufficiently developed. Arrangements for ensuring that learners are safe meet legislative requirements. A&RT provides a respectful and supportive learning environment and has satisfactory arrangements to raise awareness of equality and diversity. However, promotion of equality and diversity throughout the curriculum is weak.
9. A&RT's quality improvement measures are not used effectively. Although observations of training, assessment and reviews are well established, insufficient arrangements are in place to ensure judgements and grades awarded during observations of teaching and learning are accurate. Employers and other partners are not sufficiently involved in quality improvement. The use of target setting and management information, as a basis for improvement, is weak. The self-assessment process is inclusive but some grades proposed within the report were over-generous.

Main findings

- The proportion of learners who are successful has improved slightly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The number who complete within their planned timescale has also improved since the last inspection but remains below the national average. The proportion of learners on Foundation Learning programmes who progress to higher-level courses is low. Fewer learners leave their programmes early than in previous years.
- Learners' acquisition and development of work-based skills is satisfactory in the provider's training centres and within the workplace. They effectively develop new skills and knowledge to support their role in the workplace. Most learners improve their confidence and self-esteem although development of these skills is not always well planned or recorded.
- Learners benefit from good opportunities to progress to further study. Progression from the 14 to 16 collegiate programme onto apprenticeships and from intermediate-level to advanced-level apprenticeships is good. Many learners have progressed to study at a higher level, although the proportion of learners on Foundation Learning programmes who progress to higher-level courses is low. Employers and work placements support learners well and many learners gain permanent employment.
- The quality of teaching, training and learning is satisfactory. Learners particularly appreciate the personal support from tutors and most work enthusiastically and develop their skills. Tutors know their learners well. However, some tutors make insufficient use of information and learning technology (ILT) and do not plan well enough to ensure that all learners are sufficiently challenged.
- Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are thorough and tutors appreciate the help they receive in improving their practice. However, A&RT has no effective process to ensure that lessons are graded accurately and inspectors found that some lessons were graded too generously. Most staff hold

suitable vocational qualifications but a few have yet to complete teaching qualifications.

- Assessors work flexibly and visit learners at times to accommodate learners' shifts and work patterns. They draw on naturally occurring evidence and some use witness testimonies to confirm practice. Progress reviews are satisfactory and learners' progress is suitably recorded. Employers are kept well informed of learners' progress. However, equality and diversity issues are not discussed in sufficient depth in progress reviews to extend learners' understanding.
- The range of provision is good. Learning programmes are carefully tailored to meet employers' needs and most employers appreciate the benefits to their companies in improved work practices. There are good progression opportunities and many learners progress to higher-level qualifications. The provider successfully attracts foundation learners but has yet to engage more male learners in its childcare programmes.
- Partnership working in vocational programmes is satisfactory although few established partnerships exist with larger companies in child development, customer services, and health and social care. There are strong links with schools and with employers to find work placements in foundation learning. School representatives and employers speak positively of the benefits of programmes to their learners although not all employers are involved sufficiently in programme development and training processes.
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff offer learners good personal and welfare support. Learners with complex learning needs are referred to other organisations for help. Information, advice and further guidance are mostly provided through external specialist agencies and Connexions services. However, few detailed records are kept of the additional support given to learners or of the impact of support on learners' participation and progress.
- A&RT's senior managers have a clear strategic vision. The organisation has ambitious plans for improvement. However, more work is required to ensure the strategies needed to achieve these, including staff development and target setting, are more effective.
- A&RT's arrangements for safeguarding meet government legislative requirements. Appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are in place for all staff and a suitable register is maintained centrally. Staff have been appropriately trained to at least a basic level and managers have been trained in safer recruitment. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure learners are safeguarded in work placements or on employers' premises.
- A&RT is successful in attracting learners from under-represented groups. It provides learners with a respectful and supportive learning environment. Managers monitor the achievement differences between groups of learners and have made satisfactory progress in narrowing these gaps. However, the promotion of equality and diversity through staff training and throughout the curriculum is weak.
- A&RT reacts quickly to resolve issues as they occur and improve provision. However, self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements are not effective in removing inconsistencies in quality and standards across the provision.

What does A & R Training Services Limited need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve success rates, particularly those completed within the planned time, by setting and recording realistic targets and more frequent detailed analysis of learners' progress across all elements of their programmes.
- Further improve the review of learners' progress to ensure that learners' targets for progress are clearly identified, recorded, shared with employers and monitored effectively. Make better use of progress reviews to plan learners' training in conjunction with employers and to set targets for the development of softer skills.
- Review arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Extend staff knowledge of the use of ILT in lessons and improve lesson planning to meet the individual needs of all learners. Ensure all staff are appropriately qualified for the work they do and extend their opportunities for industrial updating.
- Extend the range of partnerships in vocational programmes. Build upon the good links with schools by developing direct links with employer forums, support agencies and community groups to identify and meet specific local needs.
- Improve staff development and target-setting arrangements to establish more challenging aspirations across the organisation and to ensure that staff competencies in teaching, subject specialism and quality improvement are further developed.
- Develop learner understanding of equality and diversity through staff training and through more effective promotion during learner reviews and during learning sessions.
- Improve quality improvement arrangements to secure more consistency of standards across the organisation through better use of data to support target setting and improvement planning and through more effective engagement of learners and employers in programme development.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- gaining skills that directly improve performance in the workplace
- the good support from the assessors who are readily available
- the ability to achieve a qualification while working
- the opportunity to develop skills which will help with career progression
- being treated like an adult in a friendly learning environment
- the flexibility in arranging meetings
- help and understanding with personal problems.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of opportunities to practice skills during off-the-job training through role play
- the pace of learning and slow progress while waiting for the assessor to visit
- the provision of learning resources such as textbooks
- the large amount of writing and the small amount of practical and creative activities
- the speed of feedback on the units/assignments submitted.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the positive impact of the training programme on businesses through improved performance of the apprentices
- the good relationship with the provider who is proactive in giving advice and developing a programme that meets their needs
- the hard work of assessors to improve learners' understanding
- the way that assessors do not get in the way of nursery routines during visits.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the opportunity for some learners to progress at a faster pace
- the amount of information about the qualification and how they can better support learners to complete
- the level of their involvement in the planning of individual learners' training programmes to ensure that in-company training is taken into consideration
- the depth of knowledge of level 3 childcare learners
- the effectiveness of deadlines for completing work.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

10. Learner outcomes have improved over the last three years. Actions to improve the proportion of learners who stay to the end of their planned programme are effective. However, the proportion of learners progressing to higher qualifications is low. A&RT has developed an improved provision to meet the training needs of the commercial and care sectors regionally and the needs of schools in Kirklees and Calderdale. It has established an improved, more flexible approach to assessment that employers and learners appreciate.
11. A&RT is aware of the need to reduce the inconsistencies in standards and variations in its practice across the programmes and across its four training centres. Managers monitor the progress of learners well. The company uses the views of employers and learners satisfactorily to inform change. However, the processes for self-assessment and improvement planning are not effective tools for change, development and the review of programmes. Target setting and the use of management information are weak features of quality improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. The percentage of work-based learners who are successful has improved slightly since the last inspection and is now close to the national average. However, so far in 2010/11 of 271 leavers only 183 have successfully completed their framework. Success rates in 2009/10 were high for learners aged 25 and over. However, in the same year success rates were low for learners aged 16 to 18. Data supplied by A&RT show that in 2010/11 an overall high and improved proportion of learners stayed until the end of their programme – 93% compared to 87% over the same period in the previous year. The data provided by A&RT on outcomes on Foundation Learning programmes and Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes show a good achievement rate but the number who progress onto other courses is low in 2010/11.
13. The proportion of learners achieving within their planned timescale has improved from 51% in 2007/08 to 57% in 2009/10, just below the national average of just over 62%. So far in 2010/11, only 52% of leavers have achieved within their planned timescale.
14. Learners' acquisition and development of work-based skills is satisfactory in the provider's training centres and within the workplace. Most learners, including those on Foundation Learning programmes, make good progress in developing confidence and self-esteem. They effectively develop new skills and knowledge to support their role in the workplace. Employers recognise the skills gained by learners and the contribution increased skills make to their productivity and performance in the workplace. A few learners make positive contributions locally through organising and performing in a carol service and presenting gifts at a local care home, working with the British Trust for Conservation in clearing sites and by involvement in fundraising following national charity initiatives.

15. Learners benefit from good opportunities to progress to further study. A high proportion of learners progress from the 14 to 16 collegiate programme onto apprenticeships and from intermediate-level to advanced-level apprenticeships. A few learners have progressed further to study at degree level. Employers and work placements support learners well and many learners gain permanent employment through carefully chosen work placements.
16. Portfolios and written work are of a satisfactory standard and meet awarding body requirements. A&RT has introduced the use of electronic portfolios on some courses and are evaluating their effectiveness. Some learners develop their computer and literacy skills and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) when compiling their electronic portfolios.
17. A&RT monitors the performance of different groups of learners appropriately. In 2009/10 male learners achieved better than women learners, altering the trend from previous years. Similarly, in 2009/10 learners from minority ethnic groups achieved better than White British learners, again altering the trend from previous years. Learners who reported a learning difficulty and/or disability have consistently achieved at a lower rate than other learners. A&RT has started to analyse performance and plan appropriate actions to improve support.
18. Learners feel safe and appreciate the arrangements which A&RT has in place to ensure their safety. A&RT and employers attach suitable priority to ensuring that learners use safe working practices and safe systems of work. Assessors reinforce health and safety compliance during assessment and progress reviews. However, in some reviews strategies to check and extend learners' understanding of health and safety and safeguarding are ineffective.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

19. The quality of teaching, training and learning is satisfactory. Learners particularly appreciate the personal support from tutors, individual coaching and group teaching. Most participate enthusiastically and complete learning activities that help them develop relevant work skills. Tutors know their learners well and most adapt sessions to meet their learners' individual needs. Learning resources are used effectively although a few lessons are not planned well enough to challenge and extend all learners. The results of initial assessment are not used by all tutors to ensure that learning methods match the individual learners' preferred ways of learning. Learners benefit from some good accommodation and training rooms, and a satisfactory range of learning resources, including interactive whiteboards and reference materials. However, some tutors are not confident enough to use ILT to make learning more stimulating and interesting.
20. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are thorough and observations are well documented. Staff see them as helpful in improving their practice and they appreciate the greater focus on key aspects such as differentiation. However, the provider relies too much on one observer and no

effective processes are used to ensure that judgements and grades are accurate. Inspectors found that some lessons were graded too generously. Other aspects of learning, including induction, assessment and reviews, are observed and have led to improvements. Most staff are suitably qualified but in a few areas staff have yet to complete teaching qualifications. The provider recognises that some staff would benefit from further opportunities for industrial updating and is starting to improve opportunities for staff.

21. Assessment visits are well planned and assessment judgements are moderated thoroughly. Assessors work flexibly, including visiting learners at times to accommodate learners' shifts and work patterns and to satisfy the needs of employers. Visits are arranged at times that allow assessors to capture naturally occurring evidence in the workplace and some use witness testimonies to confirm practice. The provider has recognised the need to improve assessment practice to enable more learners to achieve in the planned time. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Employers are kept well informed of learners' progress. Where employers cannot be involved in progress reviews further meetings are arranged to enable them to comment on learners' progress. Equality and diversity issues are considered during reviews but there is little detailed discussion of issues to extend learners' understanding.
22. The range of provision is good and meets learners', employers' and business needs well. Learning programmes are carefully tailored to meet employers' needs and some employers are actively involved in selecting study units for learners. Employers cite the benefits to their companies in improved work practices. Programmes are flexibly delivered, responsive and fully linked to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). A good choice of vocational subjects is offered. Progression opportunities are good and many learners progress to higher-level qualifications within the organisation. Good work placements help learners to find employment. Particularly good links with schools enable young people aged 14 to 16 to gain vocational qualifications and work-related experience. A small programme of enrichment activities includes visiting speakers from drug prevention units, the fire service and the National Health Service. Some learners participate in enrichment programmes such as fundraising for charity and volunteering schemes that help them gain additional experience.
23. The Foundation Learning programme successfully attracts young people with fewer qualifications and from disadvantaged areas. The programme enables many of these learners to progress further to apprenticeship programmes. The provider is seeking to attract more male learners to its childcare programmes and has set targets to measure the success of this.
24. Partnership working is satisfactory although there are particularly strong links with schools. School representatives speak positively of the benefits of the training programmes for their pupils. External partners and subcontractors in foundation learning speak highly of the good collaboration and the valuable contribution and responsiveness of the provider. Assessors' communication with employers is thorough. Employers praise the speed of response from the provider to any concerns they raise. Visits by assessors to employers' premises

to discuss their training needs are particularly valued by employers. However, a few employers are not involved sufficiently in programme development and training processes, such as initial assessment and progress reviews, although most know how well their learners are progressing. Few established partnerships exist with larger companies in child development, customer service, and health and social care. Collaborative work with other providers has supported initiatives to target harder to reach groups such as young people who are not in education, employment or training.

25. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Tutors and assessors help learners overcome any personal or welfare barriers to engagement in learning programmes. Learners feel particularly well supported by employers. A job club is run for apprentices and school learners are offered healthy meals free of charge. Learners receive helpful advice on matters such as what to wear for interviews and how to set up a bank account. Support initiatives have contributed to improved retention rates for current learners. Learners with more complex learning needs, including those with dyslexia, are referred to other organisations. Information, advice and further guidance are mostly provided through referral to external specialist agencies and Connexions services. However, few detailed records are kept of the additional support given to learners or of the impact of this support on learners' participation and progress. A&RT provides appropriate guidance to ensure that learners enrol on the correct vocational programme. Support for work-based learners to develop their literacy, numeracy and functional skills is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The chief executive and senior management team are well informed about local, regional and national training priorities and have effectively steered the organisation through a recent reorganisation to position A&RT to meet these priorities more effectively. The organisation and its board of directors have a clear strategic direction, well supported by responsible financial management. Its strategic mission is aspirational. However, target setting across the organisation is weak and undemanding. Staff training and development to meet the organisational aspirations and development needs and the needs of programmes in some areas is slow or ineffective.
27. The organisation has a supportive and positive culture that is focused on improving outcomes for learners. It has made an effective and concerted effort to improve learner retention rates. Staff are well motivated and experienced. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.
28. A&RT's arrangements for safeguarding meet government legislative requirements. Appropriate CRB checks are in place for all staff and a suitable central register is maintained. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure new staff not yet in receipt of CRB checks are supervised when they are with learners. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and managers have been trained in safer recruitment. Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of safeguarding and all are aware of the identity of

the manager responsible for safeguarding. A&RT has recently registered with the local safeguarding board and also with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to ensure it receives updates and details of training on the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Learners receive suitable information on safeguarding at induction. A&RT has now produced an informative leaflet to raise awareness of internet safety which will be shared with all learners.

29. Arrangements for the promotion of equality of opportunity are satisfactory. A&RT monitors the variations in performance between different groups of learners. Through the close monitoring of qualification progression and through additional support, including job search for unemployed learners, it is working satisfactorily to close the identified achievement gaps. Equality, diversity and issues concerned with keeping safe are discussed during learner induction but these are insufficiently promoted and reinforced through teaching and learning or during learner reviews.
30. The company successfully promotes apprenticeship programmes to schools and is successful in working with a range of partners to attract learners from a wider range of backgrounds to a number of programmes and courses. A&RT has made a positive contribution to limiting the increase in young people across the region who are not involved in education, employment or training. Young people from school who attend an A&RT programme often progress onto apprenticeship provision. The organisation provides learners with a safe and respectful learning environment. However, staff training, up-dating and development in equality and diversity issues are poor.
31. Engagement with users and other stakeholders is satisfactory. Good links with employers bring tangible benefits to learners, and A&RT involves learners and employers in developing some areas of the provision through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and networking. A&RT is active in numerous initiatives and working groups throughout West Yorkshire and has been influential in the development of local training partnership arrangements. Employers confirm A&RT's responsive and flexible approach to meeting their needs. However, these activities do not routinely extend to engage employers and learners fully in quality improvement and programme development.
32. The organisation has worked hard and successfully to reduce the numbers of learners that leave programmes early and current learner retention rates are high. These actions include the regular scrutiny of all learners' progress by staff and managers and more timely intervention when a learner's progress slows. Communications across A&RT are generally effective and often informal. The sharing and use of identified good practice is working well at programme level but no clear mechanisms exist either through working groups or staff training events for these activities to develop further to improve practices across the organisation.
33. Managers and staff use a range of reports effectively to monitor programmes and the organisation's performance. However, data are not effectively analysed to provide the range of information needed to inform monitoring, action

planning and impact analysis activities. For example, A&RT does not capture information about learners' destinations, the feedback gained from employers and learners or the range and type of support that learners receive during their programmes.

34. Formal quality improvement arrangements are inadequate. A&RT observes key learning processes appropriately, including induction, learner progress reviews and teaching and learning sessions. It has introduced new programme review arrangements for all A&RT's provision this year that are providing useful information to help staff identify actions for change and development. However, A&RT's quality improvement arrangements are not effective in systematically reducing the inconsistencies in practice and standards across the organisation. More development is required to ensure that improvement targets set are realistic and challenging and link to the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plans. Evaluation of information and data does not sufficiently support staff and managers during programme reviews.
35. A&RT secures satisfactory value for money. Learners are making satisfactory progress and are developing good skills and knowledge. Resources to support learning are satisfactory.

Subject areas

Early years and playwork

Grade 3

Context

36. The provider offers apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels in children's care, learning and development at centres in Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford and Wakefield to 328 learners. Approximately 25% of learners follow advanced-level programmes. All new starts are on the certificate and diploma in children and young people's workforce. Currently 3% of learners are male and 40% of learners are drawn from black minority ethnic groups. In addition, 23 learners aged 14 to 16 years attend via the Kirklees Collegiate programme involving four schools in Huddersfield. Arrangements are in place for individual pupils with two schools in Halifax.

Key findings

- Overall, the proportion of learners who are successful is satisfactory. In 2009/10 success rates on both intermediate and advanced levels were around the national average. However, for 2010/11 the percentage overall has dipped by 2%. The percentage of successful advanced-level learners is unsatisfactory at 67%. The proportion of learners achieving within expected timescales has improved at intermediate level but is declining and poor on advanced-level programmes.
- The rate of progress for current learners is improving, particularly in developing self-confidence. Learners effectively develop new skills and knowledge to support their role. Progression from the 14 to 16 collegiate programme is good, with learners progressing from level 2 to level 3 and a few progressing to level 4. Many learners gain promotion or employment.
- Learners feel safe and know who to contact should they have any concerns. In all centres there is sufficient attention to safe working practices and awareness of health and safety guidance and procedures. Learners have a good understanding of their role to safeguard children and young people.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory overall. In the better lessons a range of activities encourages learners to draw successfully on their previous knowledge and experience. However, in many lessons objectives are not clearly measurable or planned to meet individual learners' needs effectively. There is insufficient emphasis on the reinforcement of equality and diversity and safeguarding. A&RT recognises that tutors make insufficient use of ILT to enhance teaching and learning.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. Assessments are generally well planned. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of feedback that learners receive and the acknowledgement of their competence. A&RT recognises that on children's care, learning and development programmes there is an over-reliance on the use of workbooks to collect evidence for underpinning knowledge.

- Initial assessment is satisfactory but is not routinely used to inform individual learning programmes. Key and functional skills are not fully embedded within the curriculum area and opportunities for development are not identified on lesson plans. Progress reviews are regular but are mechanistic, failing to identify targets other than the completion of parts of the qualification. Employers are not always fully involved in reviews and internal training available to learners is not always sufficiently utilised.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Learners on intermediate programmes are found work placements. Opportunities to attend lectures and workshops are flexible to meet learners' and employers' needs, including twilight and evening sessions. Many learners take up the opportunity to progress from level 1 to level 3.
- Partnership working is satisfactory overall. The centre has very effective arrangements with six local secondary schools and provides a successful programme for 14 to 16 year olds. Wider partnerships with professionals and the public, private and voluntary sectors within the local community are underdeveloped.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Staff provide appropriate guidance about progression routes. Learners work in a supportive environment and they value the ease with which they are able to contact assessors and the speedy response they receive to their questions and concerns. Staff encourage learners and show genuine interest in their progress.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communications are effective and meetings place an emphasis on learners' progression and the number of early leavers. Staff are set appropriate targets, that are reviewed every eight to ten weeks, to monitor learners' progress. Standardisation meetings are held every six to eight weeks and are used to share best practice across the four centres.
- All staff contribute to the self-assessment process. However, the quality improvement plan does not clearly identify actions that would lead to improvements in the key areas of the provision. Plans are not sufficiently well monitored to be able to judge their impact on learners' achievements or progress. Tutors and assessors are not always sufficiently qualified and experienced for the level of programme.
- Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Teaching environments have positive images and information on display. There are insufficient opportunities created or taken to promote equality and diversity through lessons and reviews. Although tutors plan project briefs that draw on a wide variety of cultural influences, there are too few explicit opportunities created to promote diversity and actively explore cultural contexts.

What does A & R Training Services Limited need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the proportion of learners who succeed within their expected timescales by setting and recording more realistic targets and monitoring learners' progress more closely.
- Improve the review of learners' progress to ensure that learners' targets for improvement are clearly identified, recorded, shared with employers and monitored effectively. Make use of progress reviews to provide learners and employers with more detailed information on specific, measurable and achievable targets.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning through better lesson planning to meet the needs of individual learners more closely. Identify accurately the learning objectives at the start of each lesson. Share good practice across the organisation more effectively. Provide further staff training and development in the use of ILT to enhance lessons.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity in all learning processes and reviews by raising tutor and assessor awareness and understanding. Ensure that learners' knowledge of equality and diversity is extended through relevant discussions in teaching and learning sessions.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Context

37. A&RT provides Foundation Learning programmes, offering accreditation in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), and vocational and personal development. Of the 149 learners currently enrolled, 88% are female. Learners attend part time; those on work placements attend up to 30 hours a week. Programmes last for an average of 18 weeks. A team of 12 specialist staff run the programme in four locations. Prior to offering Foundation Learning programmes, A&RT offered an E2E programme.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners who stay to the end of their programme is high at 93%. The proportion of learners who progress to other programmes was satisfactory on E2E programmes but has fallen to only 37% on Foundation Learning programmes in 2010/11.
- Attainment is satisfactory. Learners' confidence, motivation and general social skills improve significantly and they engage enthusiastically in learning. Learners receive effective support which is flexible to meet their needs and they make good progress. The proportion of leavers who are successful is satisfactory, with 62% achieving qualifications.
- Learners feel very safe and demonstrate good positive attitudes within the centres. They behave well and treat each other with care and respect. A good variety of community work placements helps learners to develop a good range of skills in preparation for employment or continued learning. Placements include local Sure Start centres, nurseries and care homes.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors set stimulating tasks that keep many learners engaged. Tutors are very flexible and support learners well. However, insufficient attention is paid to planning learning activities which meet the needs of individual learners and lesson plans largely address the needs of whole groups. Tutors fail to identify and record learners' development of functional skills in vocational programmes.
- Learners' progress is consistently monitored by tutors. Personal targets are set regularly by learners and agreed with tutors although targets are not always consistent or meaningful. Initial assessment is effective for most learners. However, learners with identified special educational needs do not receive specialised diagnostic assessment or an individualised support plan.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners very successfully. They value the flexibility of programmes and pastoral support. Learners feel that feedback is taken seriously and acted upon, and they value initiatives like the breakfast drop-in which supports their learning. There is a small programme of enrichment activities, and participation in community and charity events is encouraged.
- Links with partners are effective. Prime contractors and other outside support agencies value the flexible, efficient and sensitive way that learners are

developed within Foundation Learning courses. Employers feel well supported by A&RT during learner work placements but would value the opportunity to be more closely involved in assisting with their learning.

- A&RT provides very effective support for learners, particularly addressing their personal and welfare needs. Systems are in place to provide information, advice and guidance to learners, for example by referrals to specialist agencies. A&RT's delivery of information, advice and guidance is adequate but is insufficiently incorporated into the Foundation Learning programme to provide all learners with sufficient information on progression opportunities.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Tutors receive good support from managers and they particularly valued this during the transition to foundation learning. A satisfactory and comprehensive programme of staff development enabled tutors to prepare for the introduction of foundation learning. However, not all staff are confident in the use of ILT and some staff have not yet achieved professional teaching qualifications.
- Arrangements to promote safeguarding are satisfactory. Learners are aware of basic safeguarding procedures. All staff have received training and are aware of safeguarding roles. Safeguarding is promoted to learners but is not embedded within all teaching sessions. Regular checks on safeguarding and health and safety are carried out during learners' work placement reviews.
- Equality and diversity are not effectively promoted. Learners have a partial understanding of equality and diversity and the way they affect their life and work. Tutors do not use opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons. Staff knowledge is not shared sufficiently with learners. Data are not used effectively to analyse differences between groups of learners and to set targets to address areas of concern.
- Learner and partner feedback is used well to inform curriculum development. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process during team meetings. However, the self-assessment report failed to recognise some areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

What does A & R Training Services Limited need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and progression rates for learners by more effectively planning learning activities which meet the needs of individual learners, taking account of learners' progress to drive attainment.
- Improve the assessment and planning for learners with special educational needs in order to ensure appropriate progression and targeted learning. Identify and provide for these learners, through specialised diagnostic assessment, an individualised support plan.
- Improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues and how they may affect them in life and in the workplace by incorporating equality and diversity within lesson plans.

Business, administration and law

Grade 3

Context

38. Forty-eight learners are on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes in customer service. The majority of learners (77%) are female, 13% are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 40% have a declared disability. Most learners are employed and work in a wide range of businesses across the region. Almost all of the training and assessment takes place in the workplace. The programme is managed by a part-time programme leader and one full-time and two part-time assessors.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Overall, the number of learners who successfully complete their programmes, although low in 2008/09, improved significantly in 2009/10 to six percentage points above the national average. The proportion for the customer-service advanced apprentices is also well above the national average. However, the proportion for the subcontracted business administration learners was poor in 2008/09. The provider no longer offers this programme.
- Current learners make satisfactory progress. Most learners achieve their apprenticeship frameworks within the planned time. Despite a significant decrease this year in the percentage of learners who successfully complete their programme compared with the same period in the previous year, the proportion of learners who stay to the end of the programme has improved slightly. Learners receive effective additional support to meet completion targets. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory.
- Employers and work placements support learners well and many learners gain permanent employment. Learners enjoy their training and are well motivated to succeed. Their self-confidence and self-esteem increase significantly. Learners develop good work-related skills. They are better able to deal with difficult customers and improve customer satisfaction. They make a good contribution to their workplaces.
- Learners have a clear understanding of workplace health and safety, and adopt safe working practices. They have a good understanding of their workplace rights and responsibilities. However, as yet, learners do not have a sufficient understanding of safeguarding, equality and diversity, and internet safety.
- Coaching and training are satisfactory. Learners benefit from the good mentoring provided by the workplace supervisors and by assessors. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners are given constructive and helpful feedback. Assessment plans are satisfactory and learners understand what they need to do between visits. However, some observation reports are insufficiently evaluative and some learners have too little variety in the methods of assessment.
- Planning to meet individual learners' needs is satisfactory overall. Individual learning plans record learners' long-term goals appropriately. However, most

learners' short-term targets are insufficiently detailed to be measurable and do not identify sufficiently the development of work skills such as timekeeping. Many learners are not sufficiently clear about the workplace training that will help them to meet their overall learning goals.

- Learner progress reviews are satisfactory with very good support from the majority of employers. Learners value the feedback they receive. However, too many reviews fail to record in sufficient detail learners' development and progress, and the impact on their work performance.
- Resources are satisfactory overall. Worksheets and workbooks are good quality, providing learners with interesting and varied material. However, learners do not have sufficient access to interactive activities. Assessors do not use information technology sufficiently and learners do not have remote access to learning materials.
- Programmes satisfactorily meet learners' and employers' needs. The provider is proactive in identifying placement opportunities for learners. Employers' involvement in the choice of units to be covered in the NVQs ensures that individual and business needs are met. Employers value the positive working relationships with the provider.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Staff are readily available and highly approachable, providing effective responses to learners. Initial assessment identifies additional learning and social needs, and learners receive adequate support. Guidance during induction is satisfactory and learners are given sufficient information on the frameworks to prepare them for their learning programmes.
- Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. Communication and teamwork are good and staff are well supported. Targets are set to improve success rates and the monitoring of progress against them has recently improved. The team meets regularly. However, departmental and operational meetings are not always used effectively to make improvements.
- Quality assurance processes are underdeveloped. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment, and learners' and employers' views are routinely sought to improve the provision. However, some of the quality measures, such as monitoring of learning plans and reviews and the observation of key learner processes, do not lead sufficiently to improvements.

What does A & R Training Services Limited need to do to improve further?

- Set individualised and sufficiently challenging learning goals for all learners so that more learners successfully achieve within the planned time.
- Make better use of individual learning plans and reviews to plan learners' workplace training, to set targets for development of softer skills such as confidence and motivation, and to give more detail on progress in achieving learning goals.
- Increase the use of technology to support learning and assessment by making better use of ILT equipment and software, and by providing more interactive learning materials that learners can access remotely.
- Increase discussion on equality, diversity and safeguarding during induction and reviews so that learners increase their understanding and are fully aware of the dangers of using the internet.

Information about the inspection

39. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, 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, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
40. 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)
A & R Training Services 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	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	0	0	0	0
Part-time learners	732	36	74	622
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Capacity to improve	3			
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3			
How safe do learners feel?	3			
<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	2	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?	3			
Leadership and management	3			
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3			
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?	3			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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