

# t2 Business Solutions (t2 Group)

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 58820

**Name of lead inspector:** Russell Jordan HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 23 March 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Melrose Hall  
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## Information about the provider

1. t2 group (t2) was founded in 1996 and provides a wide range of funded and commercial training and coaching. Based in Cardiff, t2 consists of three divisions: work-based learning and basic skills training in Wales; executive development and commercial training across the United Kingdom; and, work-based learning in England, offering apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes throughout the south-west region. Public funding accounted for some 90% of turnover in 2010/11. t2 aims that clients should become 'a client for life', returning to them every time a training need arises.
2. t2's government-funded training in England began in 2007 with the award of a Train to Gain contract in the south west and an apprenticeship contract in the following year. The provider has a new recruitment division focused on creating apprenticeship job opportunities for learners aged 16 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training. Available pathways are in health and social care, information technology, customer service and business administration. Health and social care accounts for around 80% of current learners in apprenticeships. Some 60% of learners are aged 19 to 24, and approximately 70% of learners are on intermediate-level apprenticeships. Estyn inspected the provider's work in Wales in November 2008. They judged t2 to be good overall and in two of the three subject areas inspected. In the other, information technology, t2 was outstanding. The scope of this current inspection is the provider's apprenticeship and Train to Gain contracts with the Skills Funding Agency in the south west of England. This is the first time Ofsted has inspected this provider.

| Type of provision          | Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Employer provision:</b> |                                        |
| Train to Gain              | 127 learners                           |
| Apprenticeships            | 967 apprentices                        |

## Summary report

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

| Overall effectiveness of provision           |  | Grade 1 |
|----------------------------------------------|--|---------|
| Capacity to improve                          |  | Grade 1 |
|                                              |  | Grade   |
| Outcomes for learners                        |  | 1       |
| Quality of provision                         |  | 1       |
| Leadership and management                    |  | 1       |
| Safeguarding                                 |  | 2       |
| Equality and diversity                       |  | 2       |
| Subject Areas                                |  |         |
| Health and social care                       |  | 1       |
| Customer service and business administration |  | 1       |

## Overall effectiveness

3. t2 is an outstanding provider with excellent capacity to improve its provision. It has built very effectively on its experience of work-based learning provision in Wales to establish a very high level of performance in its work in Train to Gain and apprenticeships in England. All staff are committed to continuous improvement and share high expectations for the standard of the provision and learners' performance. Exceptional engagement with users and systematic quality improvement processes provide an excellent platform for further improvement.
4. Learners rapidly develop very high levels of occupational skills and knowledge, enhancing their value as current and future employees. Learners feel safe and employ safe working practices. An innovative programme of education for sustainable development and global citizenship is supporting learners in making informed decisions about healthy lifestyles, recycling and resource usage, and in making a positive contribution to their community. However, this programme is at a relatively early stage of development in the provider's work in England and its full impact has yet to be evaluated.

5. t2 has been very successful in aligning its provision with government priorities, such as recruiting and supporting the achievement of learners who were previously not in employment, education or training. However, well-conceived plans to widen participation from other groups are at an early stage of implementation.
6. The management of learning is excellent. t2 takes exceptional care to understand the nature of employers' work and learners' needs so that training, assessment and support are very precisely matched to their needs. Learners and employers rightly value highly the expertise, support and flexibility of visiting assessors. Planning and review sheets show highly constructive feedback on learners' performance and sharp clarity in target setting for their next steps in learning. The monitoring of learners' progress is excellent; learners and employers are equally well informed. t2 provides outstanding value for money.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Irrespective of their prior experience, learners quickly gain high levels of self-confidence and develop excellent occupational skills and theoretical knowledge which are well matched to the needs of their employers. Learners become valued employees and an integral part of their employer's workforce.
- Learners' progression into higher levels of employment and training at the end of their apprenticeship is excellent. Many learners have progressed into apprenticeships from Train to Gain to develop their skills by completing key skills and the technical certificates. Many others progressed from intermediate to advanced level in health and social care.
- t2 and employers place a high priority on the health and safety of learners. Learners feel safe and apply safe working practices well. They have a good understanding of health and safety and take full responsibility for their own safety and that of others.
- The programme for education in sustainable development and global citizenship is helping learners to develop a strong awareness of these issues. However, it is not yet an integral part of the apprenticeship programme and so its impact has yet to be fully evaluated.
- Assessors take exceptional care to understand employers' businesses and learners' job roles to ensure that assessment is highly tailored to learners' needs. Learners and employers are rightly appreciative of the flexibility of assessors to their work patterns.
- Assessors are highly successful in enabling learners to link theory and practice. Feedback on learners' performance is highly constructive. Target setting and the monitoring of learners' progress are excellent, as is evident by the high proportion of learners who achieve by their planned end date.

- The provision meets the needs and interests of users exceptionally well. The range of programmes is highly relevant to learners' employment and their career goals. Staff are very skilled in working and communicating effectively with employers and providing frequent and clear information on learners' progress.
- Senior managers are highly successful in promoting and ensuring very high standards throughout the organisation and its provision. Learning programmes are very closely aligned to government priorities. t2 has a very positive and supportive culture; staff are highly motivated and well supported in their roles and in the achievement of their targets.
- The company has established particularly good engagement with users to support and promote improvement. It successfully uses a wide range of methods to seek users' views and makes extremely effective use of this information. t2 is highly responsive to users' views in identifying and making sustained improvements to its provision.
- t2's processes to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners are outstanding. Staff are fully committed to ensuring the effectiveness of actions for quality improvement. The company has a strong culture of acting promptly to make identified improvements. Its quality team meets frequently to monitor progress against the quality improvement plan and drive forward continuous improvement.
- t2 uses resources very efficiently and effectively to secure outstanding value for money and to meet learners' and employers' needs. Learners' progress, skills development and attainment of their learning goals are excellent. Assessors receive very good training and development. The company manages resources in a sustainable way and very effectively promotes sustainable development to learners.
- The promotion of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good. The development of learners' knowledge in the context of their work is clear from their progress reviews. However, t2's well-conceived plans to widen participation in apprenticeships by under-represented groups are at an early stage of development.

### **What does t2 need to do to improve further?**

- Achieve the ambition of integrating good practice in education for sustainable development and global citizenship in apprenticeships and evaluate the impact of this provision on outcomes for learners.
- Fully implement and evaluate plans to identify and adopt good practice in the promotion of equality and diversity to widen participation in apprenticeships.

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

- how well qualifications help them develop their skills and confidence in their job roles
- the high-quality individual training, assessment and support provided by expert and approachable assessors
- excellent, constructive feedback on their progress
- flexibility of training and assessment around their shift patterns
- making rapid progress in their learning and being able to learn at a pace which suits them.

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

- nothing to report.

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

- how well t2 meets their training needs and is flexible to their ways of working and shift patterns
- how well t2 understands the nature of the employer's work
- the standards of learners' work and their rapid progress
- assessors' knowledge, experience and professionalism
- working in partnership with a highly professional and reliable provider
- regular communication with the provider and feedback on learners' progress
- the high quality of candidates t2 recommends for interview for vacancies.

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

- nothing to report.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 1**

7. t2 has successfully maintained the sound track record of sustained improvement previously established in its provision in Wales. It sets and meets highly ambitious targets to improve outcomes for learners, which are significantly above national rates. t2 has an exceptionally clear vision and appropriate priorities to sustain improvement and raise expectations for all its users. Quality improvement plans are very well considered with clear and measurable actions, the relevant priorities and resourcing, a target date for completion and identification of a relevant member of senior staff to act as an internal champion for each improvement. The monitoring of progress is frequent, precise and well documented.
8. The company makes extremely good use of the views of users to bring about demonstrable improvement to the provision. The self-assessment is clear, self-critical and accurate. t2 has well-established processes for identifying its strengths and weaknesses across all areas of the company's work and taking prompt actions for improvement. All staff are very effectively involved in the self-assessment process. They have a very good understanding of the actions identified for improvement and their roles in supporting these actions. Staff at all levels significantly and enthusiastically contribute to securing sustained improvements.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 1**

9. The extent to which learners enjoy and achieve learning is outstanding. Their success rates are very high compared to national averages and almost all achieve their qualifications by the planned end date. From a variety of backgrounds, all learners rapidly develop excellent occupational skills and theoretical knowledge, which enhance their value as employees and their career prospects. Many progress into higher levels of employment and training at the end of their apprenticeship. Learners feel safe and apply safe working practices well. They have a good understanding of health and safety and take full responsibility for their own safety and that of others.
10. t2 has extended to good effect the education for sustainable development and global citizenship programme from its work in Wales into its apprenticeships in England. Many learners are developing a strong awareness of sustainability, of their roles in the community, and make informed choices about their health and well-being. For example, a number of learners choose to walk to work to improve their health and well-being and to reduce car usage, or have helped their employers to introduce a recycling programme. However, the programme is at a relatively early stage of implementation in apprenticeships in England and so the extent of its impact on outcomes for learners has yet to be fully evaluated.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 1

11. Training, learning and assessment are outstanding. Assessors make frequent and very effective visits to learners in their workplaces, providing one-to-one training and assessment. Assessors take exceptional care to understand employers' businesses and learners' job roles to ensure that assessment is highly tailored to learners' needs and enables learners to make excellent progress in their learning. Learners and employers are rightly appreciative of the flexibility of assessors to their work patterns. Precise initial assessment is extremely effective in identifying learners' individual needs. Assessors are highly skilled in the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills in an appropriate work context. They provide exceptional care and support for learners when personal issues arise, and encourage learners' career aspirations through their expert knowledge of their occupational areas.
12. Assessors are highly successful in enabling learners to link theory and practice and in promoting learners' independence and reflection on their professional practice. Feedback on learners' performance is highly constructive, celebrating their achievements and highlighting areas for development. Precise target setting enables learners to have a very clear understanding of their next steps in their learning. The monitoring of their progress is excellent, as is evident from the high proportion of learners who achieve by their planned end date.
13. The provision meets the needs and interests of users exceptionally well and learners' retention rates are high. The range of programmes provides learners with a suitable choice of qualifications and progression routes that are highly relevant to their employment and career goals. Staff are very skilled in working with employers to identify and meet their staff and training needs. The company provides a very good recruitment service of potential apprentices which is much valued by employers. Employers also appreciate t2's good communications with them and the detailed information given about their learners' progress. For potential learners who are not in education, employment or training, t2 provides very effective guidance in identifying appropriate career paths, help with their curriculum vitae and preparation for interview; most successfully gain apprenticeship roles with employers.
14. The company has made good progress in establishing partnerships that lead to benefits for learners. Staff work very closely with employers to support learners in their apprenticeships. For those learners who lose or have to change employment, t2 is very successful in finding them alternative employment in which they can continue their apprenticeship. Very good relationships with key staff at employers ensure effective partnership working which supports the apprentices well. Staff have forged effective relationships with a range of schools, colleges and community-based organisations to promote the benefits of apprenticeships and the opportunities available. The company has also developed effective partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and the National Apprenticeship Service.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 1

15. Leaders and managers promote very high standards throughout the organisation and its provision. The company's mission and values are well established and strongly ambitious in raising expectations through clear strategies for the planning and development of the learning programmes and related services. t2's strategy is closely aligned to government priorities, particularly in its provision for learners who were previously not in education, employment or training. Senior managers employ a thorough and highly-systematic approach to strategic planning, making very effective use of a quarterly cycle to assess and review the company's strategic objectives. Financial management to support these objectives is stringent and realistic. Management information systems are well developed and support exemplary use of data and information on learners' and employers' needs to plan and review the provision. t2 has a very positive and supportive culture, with excellent communication throughout the company. Staff are highly motivated and well supported in their roles; they have a clear understanding of t2's objectives and work very effectively to achieve their individual targets. Managers carefully set appropriately challenging targets and rigorously monitor progress.
16. t2's arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. Health and safety have a high priority. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety, continually reinforced through assessment and detailed review discussions. Careful risk assessment has led the company to ensure that staff in the field should have Criminal Records Bureau checks. The updating of staff's knowledge is regular and effective.
17. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and feel valued. They know what to do, should they feel they are being discriminated against, and are confident that their concerns are dealt with promptly, effectively and with sensitivity. Planning and review documentation shows good development of learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity in the context of their job roles, for example in working with a variety of clients and in ensuring person-centred care with dignity and respect. t2's analysis of recruitment and learners' performance data is regular and very detailed to identify any potential barriers to learning and achievement. t2 has been very successful in recruiting learners who are not in education, employment or training. However, t2 has only recently begun implementing plans to widen participation in apprenticeships by other groups.
18. t2's engagement with users to support and promote improvement is excellent. The company successfully uses a broad range of methods to seek users' views and makes very effective use of this information to bring about improvements. Engagement with learners is very effective; their views are sought at the start of their programme and at each meeting with their assessor. Learners have

opportunities to give their views through a questionnaire twice a year and to log comments on t2's website portal. The company's employer engagement strategy is comprehensive, offering frequent contact with key employer staff, opportunities for learners' line managers to give their views during assessor visits and regular reviews. Staff maintain a strong emphasis on user engagement and the company is very responsive to users' views in identifying and making improvements.

19. The company's systems and actions to improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners are outstanding. The company acts promptly to make identified improvements and is highly responsive in tackling issues that affect the quality of learners' experience. The quality team meets frequently to ensure plans for continuous improvement are carried out and to monitor progress against the quality improvement plan. The quality and performance coaches carry out evaluative and developmental observations of assessors four times a year. Internal verification is thorough and developmental. Good practice is identified and effectively shared. Managers assess the skills of staff on a quarterly basis and draw up individual action plans to support their skills development and improve their practice.
20. t2 uses and manages its available resources very efficiently and effectively to secure outstanding value for money. The rates of learners' progress, their skills development and attainment of their learning goals are all very high. Staff receive comprehensive induction; t2 provides very good development and training for new assessors. The company has very effective succession planning arrangements; many managers began working with t2 as assessors and support staff very well. Assessors are well equipped and their caseloads of learners are well planned. The company is very committed to managing its resources in a sustainable way and very effectively promotes sustainable development to learners.

## Subject areas

### Health and social care

### Grade 1

#### Context

21. Some 600 apprentices are in learning in health and social care. The majority are aged 19 to 24, with around 25% aged 25 or over and some 10% aged 16 to 18. Nearly 70% of learners are on intermediate-level apprenticeships. Most learners are female.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Learners' overall success rates are high compared to similar providers, and almost all learners complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date. They develop very high levels of vocational skills and knowledge, enhancing their value to their employers as key members of staff, and their opportunities for career progression.
- Learners make excellent progress towards challenging and precise personal targets. The standards of their work often exceed the levels required for their qualification. Learners develop good levels of numeracy which allow them to train to issue medication, for example, further enhancing their value as employees.
- Learners feel safe and use safe working practices. They show good understanding of policies and procedures for safeguarding and are aware of who to contact in their employment should they feel vulnerable.
- Training, learning and assessment are outstanding. Assessment is very flexible to accommodate employers' and learners' working patterns, including night shifts, enabling learners to make progress at an appropriate pace. Employers are rightly appreciative of the exceptional care t2 staff take to understand care settings and learners' job roles.
- Learning activities focus very sharply on meeting individual learners' needs. The excellent use of structured workbooks is highly successful in enabling learners to develop independence and to reflect on how theory links to their own practice. However, limited resources are available for individual work with the assessor; this leads to a lack of variety for learners and an over reliance on targeted questioning and textbook research.
- Planning and review records show a very detailed assessment plan for each visit. Employers contribute to the realistic and challenging targets that are set and agreed with learners. Discussion during reviews contributes very well to learners taking responsibility for their health and well-being and to their understanding of issues such as sustainability.
- Initial assessment is very effective at identifying learners' basic skills levels and any prior learning or attainment that can be used in their apprenticeship, where appropriate. The quality of provision for basic skills is exceptional. All assessors

receive training during their induction to be able to teach and assess basic skills and have ready access to specialist tutors.

- Leadership and management are outstanding. t2 places learners at the heart of its activities and supports assessors exceptionally well. Managers set and monitor challenging targets for staff. Assessors are very aware of lines of responsibility and their role in achieving the company's ambitions for learners.
- Regular contact and monthly meetings between team leaders, internal verifiers and assessors support highly-effective monitoring of learners' progress. Information technology provides the latest information on learners' progress directly from their reviews. Quarterly self-assessment meetings support an appropriately self-critical approach to continuous improvement in the quality of provision.
- The provider makes excellent use of employers' and learners' views to improve the provision. Managers have easy access electronically to prompt feedback from employers and from learners through the review meetings held every 21 days. Account managers have very regular conversations with employers to review the quality of the provider's service and learners' progress.
- The promotion of safeguarding, and equality and diversity is good. The provider has created a culture where staff and learners are strongly aware of health and safety. Staff receive a thorough induction and regular updates. Equality and diversity are an integral part of learning. The progress of all learners, including those from a low academic starting point, is excellent.
- Learners' experiences in their apprenticeships are consistently good, irrespective of their locations. Learning is made specific to each particular care setting, for example social care for vulnerable adults or care of the elderly. Learners are very aware of their own rights and responsibilities both as learners and as employees.

### **What does t2 need to do to improve further?**

- Broaden the range of resources for assessors to use to develop further learners' knowledge and understanding, and to encourage a wider variety of approaches to learning.

## Customer service and business administration

## Grade 1

### Context

22. t2 offers intermediate and advanced level apprenticeships in customer service and business administration. Almost 90 apprentices are in learning, with around 75% in customer service. Most learners are in intermediate level apprenticeships. Some 40% of learners are aged 19 to 24, and around 25% aged 25 or over.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Learners' success rates are very high compared to the national average and almost all apprentices achieve by their planned end date. Learners make excellent progress and receive highly effective support to complete their qualification on time.
- Learners develop high levels of occupational skills which are highly valued by their employers. These include their confidence in talking to clients, and independence and decision-making skills that enable them to be responsive to customer needs. Portfolios of work are well organised and of a high standard.
- Progression into employment and further training is high. Some apprentices will use the qualification to secure permanent employment, some are aiming for promotion to a higher level role and others have goals such as setting up their own business using the skills they are acquiring.
- Learners pay good attention to health and safety in the workplace and are well equipped to recognise potential hazards. Learners feel very safe and are aware of safeguarding issues.
- Training, learning and assessment are outstanding. All assessors have high levels of vocational expertise and experience. Employers rightly appreciate the exceptional care assessors take to understand employers' businesses and working practices and to ensure that assessment is highly tailored to learners' needs.
- Assessors' thorough planning ensures excellent use of workplace evidence. Feedback to learners celebrates their achievements and encourages their progress. Assessors are highly skilled in helping learners to identify areas for improvement and in stimulating their reflection on the quality of their customer service in the workplace.
- The review of learners' progress is excellent. Assessors are highly effective at setting clear and precise targets that are well understood by learners. Assessors provide exceptional care and support when personal issues arise that may affect learners' progress, for example visiting learners weekly, if the need arises.

- Basic skills support is very effective in meeting learners' precisely identified needs from initial assessment, but t2 does not yet provide sufficient specialist support for the small number of dyslexic learners.
- Excellent communication between the assessors and employers contributes to very strong partnership working. Employers value the prompt feedback on learners' progress and their participation in agreeing learners' targets. Effective agreements are in place to allow learners adequate time away from their work role for training and review.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Targets for learners' success are challenging and last year were exceeded. Staff are well supported to achieve them and feel valued. They appreciate their participation in the quarterly self-assessment meetings. They are motivated to make improvements and work diligently and successfully to achieve high standards.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners are encouraged to discuss equality and diversity at the end of each review session and show good awareness of their rights and responsibilities as learners and employees. Planning and review documentation shows many good examples of discussion of equality and diversity and how these relate to learners' work in customer service in meeting the needs of a diverse range of customers.
- Employers value the provider's excellent service and communication, and would recommend t2 to others. t2 places learners at the centre of its activities and is highly committed to the professional development of its staff. It is particularly good at coaching highly experienced customer service professionals to become qualified assessors.

**What does t2 need to do to improve further?**

- Develop appropriate resources to provide specialist support for learners with dyslexia.

## Information about the inspection

23. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
24. 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)****t2 Business Solutions**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

| Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b><br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                              | Overall  | Employer responsive |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| <b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>                                                                                   |          |                     |
| Full-time learners                                                                                                               | 753      | 753                 |
| Part-time learners                                                                                                               |          |                     |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                                                                                                     | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>            |
| <b>Capacity to improve</b>                                                                                                       | 1        |                     |
|                                                                                                                                  |          |                     |
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b>                                                                                                     | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>            |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?                                                                           | 1        |                     |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals?                                                                                | 1        |                     |
| How well do learners progress?                                                                                                   | 1        |                     |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 1        |                     |
| How safe do learners feel?                                                                                                       | 2        |                     |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>                                        | 2        |                     |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>                                                      | 2        |                     |
| <b>Quality of provision</b>                                                                                                      | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>            |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?                                           | 1        |                     |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?                                                        | 1        |                     |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?                        | 2        |                     |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?                                    | 1        |                     |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>                                                                                                 | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>            |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 1        |                     |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>                         | n/a      |                     |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?                                                          | 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?                                          | 1        |                     |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?                             | 1        |                     |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?                         | 1        |                     |

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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