XTP International Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		9–12 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	**This inspection:**	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- In 2010/11, the proportion of learners who achieved qualifications in courses such as the previous Train to Gain in public services and administration courses was in line with national averages. On a number of courses, such as administration apprenticeships, the proportion of learners achieving qualifications was low.

- Apprentices on the new public services programme are making slow progress.

- Trainers focus too much on assessment. They do not plan training sufficiently for individual learners and do not use a wide range of teaching techniques to make learning more effective.

- A number of management processes need improvement. These include staff development at all levels, and monitoring and recording of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

This provider has the following strengths:

- In 2011/12, the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is improving significantly.

- Learners develop good vocational skills and successfully apply their learning in their jobs.

- Trainers provide good one-to-one coaching and support. They work very flexibly to meet learners at times and venues most convenient to them and their employers.

- Work with employers, particularly contact-centre employers, to support their staff development programmes is good.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the link between strategic planning and operational management through high-quality staff development to ensure that all managers have the capacity to develop, implement and monitor effective and efficient systems. Ensure the business plan includes all improvement targets and review the targets systematically.

- Fully develop and implement a comprehensive and rigorous quality-improvement system that includes all aspects of the provision. Record the results of these processes thoroughly and include them in staff appraisal discussions so that all staff focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Use data efficiently and effectively to monitor all aspects of learners' training.

- Continue to focus on improving overall success rates and success rates within the planned time by developing more reliable systems for monitoring learners' progress. Take more effective and prompt actions to ensure all learners make good progress towards successful completion of the qualification.

- Ensure trainers plan in detail for individual learners' training and include clear links between on- and off-the-job training. Ensure trainers develop assessment plans which are closely linked to learners' training plans and the results of learners' progress reviews. Monitor the quality of these plans to ensure consistently good or better individual learning and assessment for all learners.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that trainers use a wide variety of teaching styles to meet all learners' individual needs. Provide a high-quality staff development programme supported by effective lesson observations to ensure all lessons are good or better.

- Ensure that trainers use vocationally relevant examples to improve learners' English, mathematical and other functional skills. Ensure that all trainers provide constructive feedback on learners' work about improving English and mathematics. Extend trainers' English and mathematical knowledge and skills through staff development programmes.

- Ensure that trainers have good staff development so they can confidently develop and extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity using relevant examples. Monitor learners' understanding of equality and diversity systematically through, for example, progress reviews.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement

- Outcomes for learners at XTP International Limited (XTP) require improvement. In 2010/11, in the previous Train to Gain contract, learners' overall success rates were low and their success rates within the planned time were satisfactory. For the small number of apprentices, overall success rates and success rates within the planned time were low.

- In 2011/12 so far, overall success rates and success rates within the planned time on workplace learning provision have improved significantly. Overall success rates for the small number of apprentices have also improved significantly.

- In 2011/12 so far, overall success rates for apprentices on business management are high. Overall success rates for apprentices on customer service, the area that has seen the largest growth and has the large majority of learners, while close to the national average require improvement. Almost all customer-service apprentices who remain to the end of their training programme achieve their qualification.

- The standard of most learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Most current apprentices make the progress that is expected of them when they start their learning programme. The progress of

the small number of learners on public-services provision is slow and it is too early to make judgements about their success rates.

- Learners progressively develop good industry-related skills, such as dealing with customers in contact centres. Learners on child-development provision develop a good range of skills to be able to deal with children's needs and behavioural issues in foster-care settings.

- In 2011/12 so far, overall success rates for the small number of learners from minority ethnic groups are higher than for learners overall. Overall success rates for the small number of female learners are marginally higher than for male learners. The number of disabled learners on the training programmes is too small to compare their outcomes with those achieved by learners overall.

- Learners acquire sufficient English and mathematical skills to complete their qualifications, with effective trainer support. However, trainers and assessors do not generally extend learners' English and mathematical skills beyond what is required by the qualifications.

- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities and keep themselves safe. However, not all learners have a good enough understanding of relevant equality and diversity issues.

- Learners' progression to further training is satisfactory. A few learners gain additional responsibility in the workplace and promotion. Some learners have progressed particularly successfully through intermediate and advanced customer-service programmes to team leading and management. Data on learners' promotion and development in the workplace are not collected routinely to evaluate fully the progress made by all those on the training programmes.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as do outcomes for learners. Trainers provide learners with good individual coaching and support. However, on most programmes trainers focus too much on assessment of learners and too little on the provision of good-quality teaching, training and learning.

- The better aspects of sessions include trainers making learning relevant to learners' work experience or situations which learners have encountered. This helps learners to apply their knowledge and identify how to improve their practices such as dealing with anxious children in foster-care settings or dealing with dissatisfied customers in contact centres.

- The weaker aspects of sessions include trainers not making good use of information and learning technology to engage all learners. Trainers do not always use a good range of activities to help all learners remain motivated and learn effectively. Trainers in some sessions make excessive use of learning workbooks with little opportunity for learners to evaluate and apply their learning.

- Many learners benefit from good personal support from their trainers. This helps them to maintain their focus on their training when they experience personal difficulties, including leaving their employers due to job dissatisfaction or redundancy. This good support encourages more learners to stay on their programmes. Managers and trainers use their links very effectively to find new employment for learners who leave their jobs.

- Overall, trainers and assessors are satisfactorily qualified and experienced. However, they do not have specific qualifications to support learners in English and mathematics. Not all trainers and assessors have received sufficient training on how to promote effectively equality and diversity in teaching and learning.

- Trainers do not always plan for, and record, individual learning needs to help steer learners successfully through their learning programmes. The majority of targets within individual learning plans lack sufficient detail. The links between individual learning plans, progress reviews and assessment plans are often vague.

- Trainers do not always use the results of initial assessment effectively to develop individual support plans. Although achievement of key skills qualifications is satisfactory, trainers do not

often include learners' identified additional or English and mathematics support needs on the individual learning plans.

- Overall, assessment practices are satisfactory and meet awarding-body requirements. However, trainers and assessors generally do not plan for the assessment of the vocational elements of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) throughout the length of the learners' programmes. Often the assessment occurs towards the end of their programmes. Learners miss many opportunities to gain naturally occurring evidence for their portfolios.

- Trainers offer learners constructive feedback on their progress and how to improve standards of work in their portfolios. However, trainers do not provide sufficiently clear written feedback which results in some learners being unclear about their progress or how they can improve their work. Learners on public-services provision are unclear about their progress.

- Trainers help learners improve their English and mathematics to achieve their qualifications. However, functional skills are not sufficiently integrated into vocational learning activities. Functional skills learning workbooks designed to promote the development of learners' English and mathematical skills are not vocationally relevant. Learners do not understand the importance of English and mathematics in the vocational context.

- Trainers provide learners with satisfactory information, advice and guidance at the different stages in their programmes. Learners employed in contact centres find customer-service provision very effectively helps them to progress to higher-level courses or seek other employment. Induction effectively helps learners to gain an understanding of their training programmes and their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. However, trainers do not extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity in sufficient depth through learning activities. The discussion of equality topics in reviews often lacks depth and detail.

Customer service Apprenticeships	Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in the overall success rates for learners which also require improvement. Trainers and assessors provide good coaching and one-to-one support through professional discussions and assessment visits. Trainers do not use a wide range of teaching techniques and make little use of initial assessment results showing how individuals learn best. Trainers are too reliant on learners completing learning workbooks during sessions.

- Trainers work very flexibly to meet learners at convenient times which develops and supports their motivation to learn. The very large majority of learners are employed in two contact centres within Merseyside; assessors frequently visit learners spending two or three days in each centre. This gives good flexibility for training and assessment in very busy workplace environments.

- Learners receive good coaching from trainers to extend their knowledge and skills, which also benefits their employers. For example, one business-management learner has produced a new human-resources manual after reviewing their employer's human resources policies and procedures; another has developed a new approach to managing the staffing rotas.

- Trainers and assessors have appropriate skills and expertise which allow learners to discuss the more specific aspects of their job roles with them. Employers say that assessors are very professional and always on time. Trainers have, or are working towards, appropriate assessing or training qualifications.

- Following progress reviews, trainers and assessors agree a number of actions with learners. However, the action points are not sufficiently detailed. Employers are not sufficiently involved in reviewing learners' progress and planning their learning.

- Assessment practices are satisfactory. In customer service, assessment is through regular observations; in business management, assessors assess learners' competency through learners

producing reflective accounts of aspects of their job roles and professional discussion. These discussions are particularly effective in helping learners to apply their learning to their job roles.

- Assessors provide satisfactory oral feedback to learners on their work. However, they do not always provide detailed written feedback to ensure learners have a clear understanding of how to improve. Assessors correct spelling and grammatical errors in the written work of business-management learners; this is not routinely done for customer-service learners.

- Initial assessment of learners' needs is satisfactory. However, trainers do not use this information sufficiently to plan learning. Trainers and assessors do not plan sufficiently for individuals' training and often individuals' learning targets and objectives are too general and lacking in detail. This prevents learners discussing their progress in depth.

- Trainers and assessors support learners with English and mathematics satisfactorily to progress and achieve their qualifications. However, they do not always extend learners' levels of English and mathematics. They do not always make English and mathematics vocationally relevant. None of the trainers currently has specialist qualifications in supporting learners to develop their English or mathematical skills.

- Learners demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity which are appropriately covered during induction and in learning workbooks. However, the checking and reinforcement of learners' understanding during progress reviews lacks sufficient depth.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement

- The overall effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement. Managers have addressed some of the significant organisational issues and now the company has a more stable staffing structure and financial basis. Staff at all levels are increasingly more ambitious for all learners. In 2011/12, success rates are significantly higher than those in 2010/11.

- The management structure and number of staff are appropriate to deliver the company's strategic and operational plans. Staff at all levels work very hard to improve learners' experience. However, not all managers and trainers have received sufficient professional development to carry out their new roles and to deliver operational plans and improvements. Not all managers have developed sufficiently efficient and effective systems and practices, such as the work rota, to allow all assessors to have enough time when visiting learners.

- Systems for monitoring staff and managers' performance are not linked sufficiently to the quality of teaching and learning nor to the success or progress of learners. Staff appraisal does not lead to clear and realistic action points for improving performance.

- Managers analyse data and information satisfactorily to monitor and evaluate the quality of some aspects of learning activities. However, the current management-information system is not efficient or always reliable. Arrangements to monitor the progress of child-development learners in different regions are not sufficient.

- Overall, quality-improvement and monitoring processes are satisfactory in identifying a number of areas which require improvement. Measures to improve learners' outcomes have been effective. However, managers do not monitor all aspects of training well enough and the pace of development of a comprehensive quality system has, until recently, been too slow. The arrangements to improve the quality of the provision are applied inconsistently and not always recorded sufficiently.

- XTP has not fully implemented its strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Until very recently the focus of the observations has been weak. For example, observations have focused too much on teaching activities and not enough on learning. The quality system does not set clear and ambitious targets, standards and expectations. The link between the results of the observations and staff development is not systematic.

- XTP's response to the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The self-assessment process is satisfactory although the self-assessment report does not make sufficient use of all the available

evidence. The self-assessment report recognises a number of key weaknesses identified by inspectors.

- Managers and trainers work well with businesses to meet their needs. Managers have used their experience in the operation of contact centres particularly effectively and have supported a number of contact-centre employers to devise comprehensive training and staff support programmes. The content of learning programmes, especially customer service and child development, are very relevant to the needs of local and national businesses.

- Managers respond effectively to complaints about equality, diversity and bullying. Learners and staff have a satisfactory understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity. Equality and diversity aspects are not included sufficiently in the strategic plan nor is the impact of the plan systematically monitored. Staff have not received recent training in equality and diversity.

- XTP meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Attention to the health and safety of learners is satisfactory.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

XTP International Limited			
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Customer service	3

Provider details

XTP International Limited	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 315
	Part-time: none
CEO	Craig Shaw
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2009
Website address	www.xtp-int.com

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	**Level 1 or below**		**Level 2**		**Level 3**		**Level 4 and above**	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	n/a	n/a
Part-time	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	**Intermediate**		**Advanced**		**Higher**			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	16	76	n/a	12	n/a	n/a		
Number of learners aged 14-16	n/a							
Number of community learners	n/a							
Number of employability learners	n/a							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	▪ None							

Additional socio-economic information

XTP operates from Stockport, Greater Manchester. It recruits learners from a wide geographical area including Merseyside, North West, Yorkshire, and the South East. The company provides training for 12 employers, a number of which are large national companies.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Shahram Safavi HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's operations manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to collect the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012

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