

# Professional Business and Training Solutions Ltd.

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		16-18 October 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
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:

- A good proportion of learners progress into some type of positive destination when they complete their training, but the number gaining full-time employment is low.
- Although the majority of learners have good levels of educational attainment on entry, initial assessment does not capture sufficiently specific detail of any written or language difficulties of learners to plan better support.
- Assessment practices do not sufficiently consider the individual need of each learner and plan activities according to those needs.
- Managers do not have good enough systems for collating information to enable them to be sufficiently self-critical about all aspects of the training provision.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- High success rates.
- Progressive development of learners' practical skills and competence through well-planned learning sessions.
- Knowledgeable and highly motivated staff use their vocational experience well to meet learners' aspirations.
- Good attention to safe working and standard operating procedures.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the number of learners gaining full-time permanent jobs by creating more opportunities through developing a wider range of partnerships with local employers.
- Ensure that the differing needs of learners are identified and used to plan assessment activities that will enable them to demonstrate their full potential.
- Improve the written feedback on learners' assessed work to enable learners to improve in subsequent tasks.
- Ensure that there is a clear understanding of the literacy levels of learners and the support needed to develop their written skills to match their employment goal.
- Develop more formal arrangements for self-assessment and improvement planning by ensuring better quality monitoring checks to identify and make improvements to the provision. Ensure all policies and procedures are updated regularly.
- Improve the promotion and reinforcement of aspects of equality and diversity during training activities to develop learners' understanding more.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The number of learners successfully gaining a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in laboratory and associated technical activities (LATA) at intermediate and advanced levels last year (2011/12), reported through the company's data, is high. This is the second year of the new funded programme aimed at skilling unemployed adults to assist with their progression into employment. Learners currently on programme are making good progress.
- Success rates have greatly improved from the last year of the Train to Gain programme in 2010/11, when, working towards the same NVQ qualifications, success rates declined significantly from the previous year and were well below national averages.
- Learners gain valuable personal development skills. They are motivated to attend and make good progress in improving their self-confidence as they develop high levels of vocationally-relevant practical skills.
- While the company collates information about the diverse range of learners' backgrounds it does not routinely analyse this data relating to the performance of all learners. However, there is no significant difference in the achievement of learners from different backgrounds.
- Learners' progression to higher level training is not an aim for the majority of learners as most are already well qualified when they enrol on the programme, with qualifications to at least intermediate level, but including a substantial number with degree level qualifications. However, LATA qualifications and the related practical skills are new to them and where funding is possible the company offers progression to advanced level. A substantial number of learners last year took advantage of this, progressing to and gaining advanced level qualifications.
- Overall progression into some type of further learning, training or employment is satisfactory. However, the number of learners securing full-time permanent work last year was low. Over half the learners who left work part-time in temporary jobs or undertake voluntary work while they seek employment.

## The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Although success rates are high, uniform assessment practices limit the opportunities for individual learners to develop to their full potential. Many learners produce well-researched written work that significantly exceeds the standard required by the award. The trainer uses good vocational knowledge of medical laboratories very well to demonstrate the high standards and meticulous nature of the job role, which is highly valued by learners.
- Well-planned learning sessions, with a good range of real laboratory-based tasks, develop and extend learners' skills and confidence in approved operating procedures. Teaching is particularly effective in supporting the development of learners' understanding of the complex concepts involved. Learners are enthusiastic about the training and actively participate in the tasks, and attendance and punctuality are good.
- Most learners are unemployed when they enrol, and see this qualification as a new start in a challenging career. Learners generally make good progress within the sessions and develop high levels of practical skill. However, most come with a much higher level of qualification than is required and consequently progression to higher-level qualifications is limited. Several learners return as volunteers to assist in the training and so further improve their skills and job opportunities.
- Learning is effectively supported by partnership arrangements with a London National Health Service hospital that provides work experience placements for many of the learners. However, there is no feedback from the placement into assessment practices and nothing added to the evidence portfolio.
- The sessions delivered within the centre focus appropriately on building high levels of practical skill and competence. Learners develop their underpinning knowledge well through independent research activities and written responses to exercises to supplement their evidence portfolios. However, as all portfolios are structured similarly and contain much of the same evidence, it is difficult to distinguish the work of individuals even though they come from a wide variety of backgrounds and demonstrate different levels of understanding.
- Learners have appropriate reviews of their progress at the start of the course and again on completion, usually between 10 and 12 weeks. This a self-reflective review of the skills they have acquired during the training and does not lead to challenging targets negotiated with the assessor or any differences in assessment practice to meet individual performance or need.
- The quality of written assessments vary significantly between very well researched and comprehensively written documents, to brief and cursory answers that do however meet the minimum requirements of the award. Written feedback on this work is minimal and confirms compliance to the award standard but does not inform possible improvements or praise excellence. All learners undertake the same practical assessments often working in small groups and sharing results, so it is difficult to identify individual good practice and, although this may be observed by the assessor, it is not recorded in learners' evidence portfolios.
- Internal verification is systematic and complies with the awarding body requirements, confirming sufficiency and standards of evidence.
- Few learners take an initial assessment to identify any support needs and only those with lower levels of entry qualification are assessed; currently five learners receive support for foundation level literacy. However, although attendance is satisfactory for these additional sessions, success rates for these programmes are low and learners' lack of confidence in literacy is not significantly improved. Learners with more complex learning needs, such as those requiring extensive English as a second language programme, are usually advised to attend a local further education college.
- Group work in teaching sessions is well planned, specifically to foster good relationships and promote effective team working. During induction to the programme, equality and diversity are introduced but the focus is mainly on legislative aspects. Few learning activities are planned or

developed to promote further understanding or meet the individual needs of the diverse backgrounds of learners.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

## Requires improvement

- Managers are working diligently to implement the necessary changes to the company and its resources since the new contractual and funding arrangements came into effect. The specialist training of laboratory technical skills remains clearly in line with their vision. However, managers have been unable to adapt the provision fully to meet all the needs of the changed status of its current learners.
- Managers have made swift changes to physical resources for its training provision. Moving to new high street premises and undertaking alterations to suit the training provision were a priority and the company now provides a public-facing retail shop, an adequate laboratory training section and a general training room. However, reductions in the number of training staff are placing extra responsibilities on training staff that are affecting the overall management operations of the provision.
- While managers set few formal targets relating to learners' outcomes, success rates are high. The majority of learners are unemployed when they enrol, but a large number of them already have at least an intermediate level qualification when they start their training, although not in technical laboratory skills.
- The use of management information requires further improvement to ensure that data are used more effectively to monitor all aspects of the performance of different groups of learners.
- Teaching and training provided for learners are generally good, but the company does not ensure that assessment practices are of the same quality. PBTS employs a small workforce but uses a highly-qualified and vocationally experienced trainer and offers good opportunities for learners to work in a real laboratory setting. Regular external audits of the laboratory resource confirm that the company is appropriately compliant.
- Observations of teaching and practical training are often informal but, where there are records, the content tends to focus too little on the learning taking place. However, learners are highly motivated to succeed and take up volunteering jobs with the company and with external organisations while they seek employment.
- Managers have a realistic understanding of their strengths but not of all weaknesses. The self-assessment process requires further development to include the views of learners and interested partners more to provide managers with a wider overview of how well the training meets learners' and employers' aspirations.
- Improvement planning, whilst often through informal procedures, is developing more formally. The company now has a useful annual audit plan to help in the way it plans to monitor all aspects of the training. It is too early, though, to judge how the implementation of this will link to the self-assessment process or how effective any identified actions for improvement will be on the quality of the training.
- PBTS promotes equality and diversity well during induction, but it is not sufficiently reinforced during training and managers do not ensure all staff have updated training. PBTS is successful in promoting the training it provides through well-thought-out marketing strategies to widen the participation of unemployed adults from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The company is particularly vigilant to ensure the safety of learners within the laboratory and attached retail facility through a closed-circuit television operated within the main office. Learners and staff demonstrate a strong mutual respect of one another.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Professional Business and Training Solutions Ltd.

<p><b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b></p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	<b>Overall</b>	Employability
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	3
Outcomes for learners	<b>2</b>	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>3</b>	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>3</b>	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Manufacturing technologies	<b>3</b>

## Provider details

Professional Business and Training Solutions Ltd.	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 114
CEO	Mr David Taiwo
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2008
Website address	www.pbtsltd.co.uk

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Part-time</b>	-	-	-	41	-	-	-	-
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>								
	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	41							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ N/A</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

The provider attracts adult learners mainly from across London boroughs where unemployment is slightly below the national average. The proportion of the local population who has no qualifications or qualifications below foundation level is 10% less than nationally; 59% hold qualifications at advanced level or above, 7% above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Diane Stacey HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the Managing Director 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 on-line questionnaires to gather 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 areas 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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