

Voyage Group Limited

Employer

Inspection dates		23-26 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:

- The success rate for apprentices and the rate for learners completing within agreed timescales require improvement.
- The range and access to learning resources to meet individual learner needs is limited.
- Targets to guide learners to make appropriate progress relevant to their starting points are not precise or challenging.
- Some important aspects of the programme still require development and improvement and not all elements of the programme perform consistently to the expected standard.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills.
- Initial assessment, used to identify preferred learning styles and levels of numeracy and literacy, is thorough.
- Equality and diversity are integrated well into learning.
- The apprenticeship programme meets the needs of learners and the business well and learners are gaining relevant skills and confidence.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the apprenticeship success rate and the success rate for learners completing within agreed timescales.
- Establish a clear strategy for wider progression opportunities for learners that they understand well.
- Improve the support for individual needs by increasing the range of assessment methods used.
- Improve review and feedback to learners by setting more precise, achievable and challenging targets.
- Introduce a clear specification for the role of mentor. Establish a policy for the selection of mentors and for the operation of the role.
- Introduce and operate a quality improvement system that covers all aspects of the training programme. Establish high standards for these aspects, measure performance and set improvement targets.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- The success rate for the advanced apprenticeship programme is very high and for the apprenticeship programme it has improved significantly from a small base. The overall success rate for learners completing within agreed timescales is in need of improvement.
- The progress learners are making on their programmes is generally satisfactory as is the standard of their work. However, Voyage does not fully exploit the expertise of its employees to help learners achieve to their full potential, and therefore, progress for some learners is slow.
- Learners are developing and enhancing good personal, social and employability skills to improve their effectiveness in the workplace. This is particularly good for learners who are new to the sector. The majority of learners demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours toward their employment and subscribe well to the company's beliefs and values.
- Some learners report a difficulty in moving to a higher level qualification or permanent employment following successful completion of the apprenticeship programme due to sector regulations and the need to obtain a supervisory role. Further progression is also difficult for those successful apprentices who do not wish to move location.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
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- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which correlates well with requirement to improve outcomes for learners. The majority of assessors provide reliable and timely support through frequent visits, email and telephone contact. Learners are highly motivated and committed to training. However, for some learners the lack of an assessor has significantly reduced opportunities for training and assessment leading to some demotivation and slow progress.
- Most workplace managers have appropriate expertise and knowledge to support, encourage and challenge learners. However, some managers do not always dedicate time to formally monitor

learners' development and deliver the support required to ensure they progress. Learners often receive useful, but mostly informal, support from their peers who have completed similar qualifications. Some managers are heavily reliant on informal communication with assessors and learners to keep them informed about individual progress.

- All new learners undergo a thorough initial assessment to identify preferred learning styles and levels of numeracy and literacy skills. This is not always used effectively to plan future learning and assessment. Personal learning tasks, set for completion between assessor visits, generally lack sufficient detail to prepare learners well for assessment. The level and range of tasks do not always provide sufficient challenge for those learners who are very capable or have been employed in the care sector for several years.
- Assessment is in line with awarding body requirements. However, oral and written feedback from assessors following assessment is variable. Some assessment practice is good with assessors providing constructive feedback and clear guidance on how to improve. Where practice is less effective the range of assessment methods is narrow and assessors do not acknowledge learner success adequately.
- Learners work on a series of related tasks that accurately reflect the demands of their job role. Most assessors discuss the content of learners' work during their visits but in some cases discussion is not sufficiently probing to assess accurately the learning resulting from completion of a task. Learners are not always clear about how to organise assessed work to demonstrate their progress.
- Learners recognise the importance of English and mathematics skills in relation to their job roles. Key skills projects are directly relevant to the workplace and some assessors make good use of naturally occurring evidence. However, specialist support for learners who are experiencing difficulty is not always adequate. Available resources do not always meet the needs of individual learners allowing them to overcome their personal barriers to learning.
- Equality and diversity are effectively integrated into learning. Relevant references are made to equality and diversity when discussing learners' written work with specific links to workplace practice. All learners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in meeting the diverse and significant needs of service users. They recognise this as an important aspect of their job role and a vital part of supporting the company ethos.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Directors and managers have high expectations and ambitious plans for continuing to improve the quality of the provision. Voyage has a good record of successfully implementing improvements and achieving high standards of performance in government funded training. The values, culture and practices of the company emphasise the priority of meeting individual needs and the importance of developing the workforce to provide high standards of service.
- Managers have successfully strengthened apprenticeship training and introduced more relevant off-the-job learning sessions. However, the time required for most learners to complete their programmes was underestimated which impacted on the number of learners who completed their apprenticeships within agreed timescales. The length of learners' programmes is now aligned with national guidelines and is supplemented well with additional training support provided where required.
- Leaders and managers have successfully raised the profile of training and made improvements in the communication strategy with directors and operational management teams. Voyage has established a programme that meets the needs of learners and the business well and is achieving successful outcomes for learners who are gaining skills and confidence. However, a group of learners who started in 2011/12, and have completed all elements of the programme,

have only just received their apprenticeship certificates due to administrative delays outside the control of the provider.

- Some important aspects of the programme still require development and improvement. Directors and managers clearly recognise this and have a good understanding of what is required along with plans to implement improvements. The development of a clear strategy to provide guidance on progression and options for learners is underway. Training staff are working to improve planning, to strengthen internal coordination of the different elements of the programme and to ensure learners have access to the training available internally.
- Managers and experienced staff generally support training in the workplace well but inspectors reported incidents where this requires improvement. The role of the learner mentor is not specified clearly enough and the selection policy is too informal with often insufficient time planned for the role to be effective.
- Standards and expectations for the operation of the training programme are set with staff and are understood well. Along with the recent introduction of more off-the-job training for apprentices the company has established a sound process for improving teaching and learning but it is too early to judge its impact. Other evaluation and feedback is reported through operational meetings, service reviews and from the internal verifiers' work.
- Not all elements of the programme perform consistently to the expected standard and some staff have been replaced. Overall management reporting and evaluation of the quality of the training programme requires improvement. The current approach is not sufficiently systematic in measuring and improving the effectiveness of key learning processes such as induction, coaching, reviews, support and guidance and on-the-job training. This results in some variable performance.
- The collection of users' views and the use made of them to improve the programme are insufficiently robust and based on a narrow view of the definition of users. Learners' views are collected on exit, or completion of the programme, in a very superficial way and in conditions which do not guarantee objectivity. Other users' views on the apprenticeship programme such as managers, mentors and other stakeholders are not collected systematically. This area for improvement is recognised in the self-assessment report.
- The company promotes equality and diversity effectively. Regular and frequent updating and training events provide employees with a good awareness. The content of the apprenticeship programme contains suitable equality and diversity training and learners have a good understanding.
- Clear messages are communicated through all the company's policies, procedures, communications and at individual reviews with apprentices. Monitoring of participation, progress and achievement for different groups of apprentices takes place and is satisfactory. No significant gaps in achievement rates of different groups have been identified.
- The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Voyage's approach to safeguarding is well established and apprentices demonstrate a good understanding. Safeguarding is central to the primary task of the organisation and is clearly and effectively located in the apprenticeship training programme. Frequent and regular individual reviews of safety take place along with regular assessment of its practical application at work. Apprentices develop appropriate safe working practices.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Voyage Group Limited									
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	3				3			
Outcomes for learners	3				3				
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3				3				
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3				3				

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3

Provider details

Voyage Group Limited	
Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 277
	Part-time: N/A
Principal/CEO	Sally Tommy, Head of People Development
Date of previous inspection	April, 2009
Website address	www.voyagecare.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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
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	N/A	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+		
	22	261	N/A	64	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:	N/A							

Additional socio-economic information

Voyage provides an extensive range of services in the care sector for young people and adults in England, Scotland and Wales. It holds a contract for the delivery of health and social care apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships throughout England with the Skills Funding Agency that is managed by the National Apprenticeship Service. Apprenticeship training is managed through the company's centre based in Lichfield, which is an accredited centre for the delivery of apprenticeships with Edexcel and City & Guilds. All apprentices are employed by Voyage and support service users in a wide variety of settings including home and community support.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Robert Hamp HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of People Development 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 to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all apprenticeship provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject 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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