

# Training for Today Limited

## Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		19–23 November 2012
Overall effectiveness	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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 numbers of apprentices successfully completing their programmes within the planned end dates requires improvement.
- The proportion of foundation learners that move into employment or further training at the end of their programme is too small, although data in the current year show an improving trend.
- The quality of teaching and learning experienced by learners is too variable across the provision and not enough is consistently good or better.
- Assessment practices are not effective in supporting all learners to make timely progress. Many learners do not have sufficiently clear and measurable targets to help them improve.
- The performance management of learners, tutors and curriculum managers requires further development to ensure it systematically identifies and corrects underperformance.
- Promotion of equality and diversity during learning sessions and at learner reviews is not sufficiently planned to increase learners' understanding.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- Many apprentices develop good workplace skills that are valued by their employers.
- Foundation learners develop good personal and social skills.
- Vocational resources are good including the excellent onsite salons.
- Tutors and assessors offer good personal support that is highly valued by learners.
- The new parent company has a clear strategy and detailed plan in place for improving programme quality, learner progress and staff performance.
- Leaders and managers work effectively with local authorities, key provider networks and schools to establish good partnership working and to develop the provision to meet local needs.

## Full report

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

- Increase the numbers of learners successfully completing their programmes within their planned end dates.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all learners are fully engaged in and stimulated by learning that includes a wider range of interactive activities and better use of technology.
- Improve the standard and frequency of assessment for all learners with a clear focus on providing regular feedback that promotes improvement.
- Improve target-setting for all learners to focus their attention on what they need to learn and ensure that progress reviews highlight clear, short- and medium-term targets.
- Develop and implement a strategy for foundation learners to have a range of appropriate practical experience in the workplace.
- Implement a strategy to ensure the performance and progress of learners on all programmes are regularly monitored and underperformance or slow progress is quickly identified, managed and improved.
- Accelerate the implementation of the recently introduced performance-management process to better monitor the performance of curriculum managers, tutors and assessors.
- Increase staff confidence and understanding of equality and diversity to promote equality and diversity better through all aspects of the learner journey.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcomes for learners require improvement. Overall success rates indicate an improving trend, following a decline in 2009/10, to just above the national rate in 2011/12. Across the provision, success rates within the planned end date have improved but remained just below the national rate in 2010/11. Most current learners are making good progress.</li> <li>▪ In hairdressing, which has the largest cohort of learners, overall success rates are largely in line with the national rate in 2010/11 and 2011/12.</li> <li>▪ For advanced apprentices, the overall success rate has improved since the previous inspection and in 2010/11 was just above the national rate with a continuing upward trend in 2011/12. Overall success rates for intermediate apprentices have increased since the previous inspection to just above the national rate in 2011/12.</li> <li>▪ Training for Today Limited (TfT) has accurately identified actions to improve low success rates on the health and social care apprenticeship. In 2010/11 success rates were significantly below the national rate. Following a review, the number of learners on the programme was reduced and the small number of those in learning in 2011/12 have successfully completed.</li> <li>▪ Success rates for foundation learners require improvement. The number of learners who moved into further education or employment in 2010/11 was low. There was a further decline in 2011/12 but in the current year early indicators show an improving trend.</li> <li>▪ Apprentices in all areas develop good workplace skills that are highly valued by their employers. Many gain promotion at work and take up posts of responsibility with higher pay as a result of achieving their learning goals.</li> <li>▪ Learners generally produce good standards of work. Attendance is improving.</li> <li>▪ A reasonable number of learners progress from foundation to intermediate level programmes. However, insufficient learners progress to higher level programmes.</li> </ul>	

**The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment overall requires improvement and the variability of these processes reflects the need to improve outcomes for the majority of learners. Although the group and individual workplace coaching sessions for a number of apprentices are good and actively support their development, too many teaching and learning sessions require improvement and inspectors found a minority of inadequate teaching and learning. Too many learners fail to achieve their qualifications.
- In the better sessions, tutors use an interesting variety of activities which promote sustained learner involvement. Learners are set high levels of challenge and are encouraged to work independently. Many tutors use questioning skilfully to ensure learning is checked.
- In too many sessions, however, learning is not planned sufficiently to meet individual learners' needs. The pace of these sessions is often slow and learners' progress is hindered. Learners have too few chances to actively participate and lose interest.
- Resources are mostly good. Classrooms have interactive whiteboards and both tutors and learners have good access to information and learning technology (ILT). However, technology is not used sufficiently or imaginatively enough to enliven lessons.
- Apprentices receive good training from their employers and in Tft's salons. Many learners soon make good contributions in their workplaces. Hairdressing and beauty therapy learners work with confidence when delivering client treatments.
- Assessment practices vary significantly. Most customer service and business administration apprentices receive regular workplace assessments and they benefit from the regular and detailed feedback. However, foundation learners do not receive sufficient regular feedback about their progress. Hairdressing and beauty therapy apprentices do not benefit from sufficient and well-planned workplace assessment. Although assessors have laptop computers, they do not routinely use the technology on the workplace visits for assessment.
- Staff are enthusiastic, well-qualified and have good occupational knowledge that they successfully use to motivate and engage learners. Learners are encouraged to produce good evidence for their portfolios. Foundation learners complete some interesting research activities using computers. However, not all learners routinely have their work marked and errors in grammar and spelling are not always corrected.
- Tutors do not plan and review apprentices' learning sufficiently to ensure they make progress quickly enough. Many apprentices do not have clear, measurable targets for improvement. Learners' reviews and action plans are mostly too heavily focused on achievement and do not reflect sufficiently on learning or skills development. Employer input in learner reviews varies. Foundation learners' short- and medium-term targets are insufficiently specific.
- Apprentices receive good support from well-qualified staff to develop functional skills. In addition to the regular monthly workplace visits, learners receive additional visits if they are struggling or failing to make sufficient progress. However, in hairdressing and beauty this support is sometimes delayed. Tutors do not routinely receive the results of initial assessments.
- Apprentices are not encouraged to develop functional skills beyond the level required for their framework. Learners with additional or complex needs are given good support. However, managers are not always able to calculate accurately the impact of the support on learners' achievements.
- Apprentices receive adequate advice and guidance which helps them in deciding their next step in learning. Foundation learners receive good information and thorough advice from the engagement officers. In administration and customer service, learners are encouraged and assisted to progress in their work roles. Induction fails to engage and interest many learners sufficiently with too much information provided at one time.
- While learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity, their knowledge is insufficiently extended during progress reviews. Although learners treat each other fairly and

with respect, equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted and integrated into teaching and learning activities.

## **Hairdressing and beauty therapy**

Requires improvement

### **Apprenticeships**

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as do the overall success rates which are broadly at the national rate. Success rates in different age groups and levels show significant variations. Advanced apprentices in hair, and intermediate apprentices in barbering and nail service are achieving highly, while the success rate for intermediate learners in the 16 to 18 age group is low.
- Most classroom teaching observed by inspectors had good or better features. Tutors ensure that learners acquire and apply relevant employability skills and occupational knowledge. However, a few lessons are too teacher-led and learners are insufficiently challenged.
- One-to-one training sessions in the workplace are carefully planned and use a good range of resources that engage and motivate learners in acquiring skills such as bridal styling. Tutors and assessors use their good vocational experience to engage and inspire learners in developing current commercial styling techniques.
- Assessment of learners' practical work is not sufficiently rigorous. Planning does not focus effectively on the completion of units, and workplace visits are often used for the reinforcement of knowledge and skills rather than assessment, which impedes learners' progress towards unit completion. Learners are not sufficiently aware they can be assessed on aspects of more than one unit simultaneously.
- The monitoring of learners' progress and achievement is weak and slow progress is not sufficiently identified. Progress reviews do not focus enough on target completion. Learners are asked what they have been practising in the workplace but this is not followed up sufficiently and it does not feed into target-setting. While employers are informed of the outcomes of assessors' reviews with learners they are not always involved in the review process.
- Personal, learning and thinking skills are skilfully embedded into the sessions and workplace visits, with tutors using a good visual resource for learners to identify what skills they have exhibited during the learning session. Good improvements in learners' personal development and employability skills encourage them to be more responsible in the workplace.
- Learners enjoy using the excellent salon resources. Learners are employed in good-quality salons with supportive employers. The use of ILT is underdeveloped: it is not used during workplace visits for training or assessing.
- All learners complete initial and diagnostic assessments for English and mathematics, a skills scan and a learning-styles questionnaire. However, the initial and diagnostic results are not routinely used to inform individual learning programmes. Functional skills levels are determined by the framework rather than by assessment results.
- Equality and diversity, particularly relating to the variety of clients, are not sufficiently promoted through teaching, learning and progress reviews. Opportunities to promote equality and diversity in a wider context are overlooked. Tutors approach equality and diversity with varying degrees of confidence and expertise.
- Advice and guidance for learners are sufficient to ensure they are on an appropriate programme at the correct level. Learners receive a satisfactory briefing about their apprenticeship at induction. However, this relies too heavily on information booklets. A brief skills initial assessment is carried out but this does not inform individual learner targets.

**Foundation Learning**

Requires improvement

**Foundation Learning**

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The number of learners who moved into further education or employment in 2010/11 was low. There was a further decline in 2011/12 but in the current year early indicators show an improving trend.
- In the better learning sessions planning is thorough, delivery is enthusiastic and questioning is effective. Tutors have high expectations and engage, support and motivate learners. Learners are fully involved and make good progress.
- In the weaker sessions learning is not sufficiently matched to the needs of individual learners. Tutors talk for too long and insufficient emphasis is placed on active learning. A good range of resources is available but ILT and other resources are not always used fully to support learning.
- Pastoral care and support are very good. Many learners have multiple and complex barriers to learning and they have access to good support, advice and guidance from tutors and engagement officers. Good use is made of external agencies dealing, for example, with drugs misuse, youth offending, and teenage pregnancy when learners need specialist advice.
- A varied range of occupational options, including hairdressing, retail, childcare, and health and social care is included in the programme vocational strand. However, the range is limited and does not include plumbing, leisure, travel and tourism, electrical, or animal care, which are also of interest to learners. Insufficient importance is placed on learners having practical experience in the workplace through work shadowing, work tasting and work experience.
- Initial assessment is satisfactorily used to ascertain learners' levels in English and mathematics, and their preferred learning style. However, the outcomes are insufficiently used to plan their learning. Short- and medium-term targets are not sufficiently specific, measurable, challenging and time-bound.
- Progress reviewing is variable. The good reviews successfully engage learners and focus on their learning and progress. The weaker reviews, however, are insufficiently specific and pay too little attention to what has been learned. Targets on reviews also lack sharpness and clarity and some writing is difficult to read.
- The quality of learners' work is generally good. A variety of evidence is included in their portfolios, which are systematically organised. Although summative assessment meets awarding body requirements, there is insufficient formative assessment to inform learners about their ongoing progress and what they need to do to improve.
- Learners have good opportunities to obtain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. However, while English and mathematics are integrated into a minority of other lessons, opportunities for improving learners' English and mathematical competencies, in planned and spontaneous ways, are often neglected.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. When learners are interviewed before joining the programme, they receive timely and relevant information and advice about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements. The induction process is too complex and the group induction booklet, which contains some very useful information, is too difficult for learners with lower levels of literacy.
- Inclusion of minority ethnic learners and learners with multiple barriers to learning is very good. There is good acceptance of diversity, and harmonious working relationships develop. Promotion of equality is often good but in a minority of sessions opportunities for explicitly promoting equality of opportunity are overlooked.

**Administration and customer service**

Good

**Apprenticeships**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the overall good success rates. While most customer-service learners achieve their qualification, the success rate is lower for the small number of advanced administration apprentices. A large majority of current learners are making good progress.
- Assessors are well-qualified and have a good understanding of the organisations in which learners are employed. Learners are highly motivated and develop good skills in the workplace.
- Learners receive high levels of support from assessors. They show initiative and their challenging short-term action plans help them to concentrate on what is expected between assessors’ visits. Support is flexible and focused, and learners’ progress is monitored very effectively to ensure they achieve as planned.
- Learning sessions are skilfully designed to meet learners’ individual needs and to help them develop a wide range of work-related skills that are relevant to their employment. While short-term planning is effective, the majority of learners are not fully aware of their longer-term training plans. Good discussions take place with learners and employers but these are not always recorded in detail.
- Learners find induction confusing, with a lot of information given in a fragmented way. Staff are not using their skills and experience to make the induction memorable. Opportunities for embedding the use of ILT are often overlooked.
- Learning targets focus predominantly on the achievement of the qualification rather than the on- and off-the-job training. The standard of learners’ work is high, with a good range of evidence presented in their portfolios. Learners are very aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve.
- Progress reviews are detailed and employers’ views are very helpful in guiding learners’ development. Targets set at reviews are followed up at subsequent assessment visits and provide learners with clear guidance on further skills development. However, in administration, reviews do not evaluate the impact of learning and the application of administrative and personal skills.
- In business administration, checking of spelling, punctuation and grammar is effective. However, in customer service insufficient importance is given to the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. The provision of additional support is very good and learners benefit considerably from it.
- Information, advice and guidance are good and help learners identify their future career aims. Learners receive good encouragement to progress to higher levels in their career and, where appropriate, they are supported to develop their work roles. The majority of learners seen by inspectors have progressed successfully from the in-house training programmes to employed positions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. While learners receive a basic workbook at induction there is insufficient follow-up in progress reviews to ensure learners’ knowledge and understanding are extended. Learners feel safe and understand how to recognise and report bullying, harassment and unfair treatment.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. The new parent company has a clear strategic vision with a focus on integrating TfT into the wider Babington Group while improving standards of quality and performance. Leaders and managers work effectively with local authorities, key provider networks and schools to establish good partnership working and

develop the provision to meet local inclusion needs. The clear structure of meetings promotes effective communication.

- Oversight by the parent company is developing effectively through detailed monthly reports on the Tft provision to the board. Although recent, the comprehensive action plan to meet the challenging strategic objectives is being skilfully implemented. Early examples of progress include investment to upgrade computers and a recent good incentive scheme to successfully improve retention on the Foundation Learning programme.
- The existing performance-management process involves monthly individual meetings and while it promotes good communication about operational issues, the management of staff performance is insufficiently rigorous. The Babington Group is establishing a comprehensive performance-management structure with clear and specific targets which is having an impact at senior levels. However, it is too early to judge its impact on curriculum management, teaching, learning and assessment. The management of subcontractors is satisfactory overall but feedback on performance is not always sufficiently formal.
- Observations of key learning processes including assessment, tutorials, and reviews are well established and routinely carried out. Recently unannounced 'walk through' observations have been introduced. Outcomes of observation are recorded on a database and analysed thoroughly with common improvement themes and good practice identified. However, post-observation action plans are not consistently challenging to promote improvement.
- Self-assessment is thorough with a very structured approach to involving staff and evaluating evidence across all aspects of the learner journey. Collection and evaluation of learners' and employers' views are effective in identifying and promoting improvements. The self-assessment report accurately reflects the issues in Foundation Learning but it is not sufficiently specific about areas for improvement in hair and beauty, business administration and customer service.
- The effectiveness of curriculum planning and management vary across the provision. The planning and management of business administration and customer service are effective while in hairdressing and beauty therapy the management of assessment processes, progress reviews and learners' progress are underdeveloped.
- A restructure of the Foundation Learning programme now provides more varied provision but opportunities for work experience on employers' premises are insufficient to meet learners' needs. Clear plans are in place to expand the business by working with local partners to widen the range of provision and targeting specific disadvantaged groups.
- Although Tft has appropriate policies and procedures for promoting equality and diversity, promotion during training sessions and at learner reviews is not sufficiently planned and promoted to expand apprentices' understanding of equality. In Foundation Learning the inclusion of minority ethnic learners and learners with multiple barriers to learning is very good.
- Tft routinely analyses the performance of different learner groups but has not developed a detailed action plan to effect any change in these to narrow the identified achievement gap. Tft meets and exceeds its statutory requirements for safeguarding its learners.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Training for Today

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	3
<b>Foundation learning</b>	3
<b>Administration</b>	2
<b>Customer service</b>	2



## Provider details

Training for Today	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,099
	Part-time: 88
Managing Director	Carole Carson
Date of previous inspection	16 November 2007
Website address	www.trainingfortoday.co.uk

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+	
<b>Full-time</b>	100	25	19	13	1	2	N/A	N/A	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	65	105	19	84	N/A	N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	86								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	25								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sports Coach Training Global Limited</li> <li>■ Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>								

## Additional socio-economic information

Training for Today Limited (TfT) is a private training provider. The company was acquired by the Babington Group in August 2012 and is in the process of being integrated with the Babington Business College. TfT's head office and main training centre is situated in Bolton. In 2001, people from black and minority ethnic groups comprised 11% of the local population. The Indian community is the largest ethnic group. The number of young people achieving five or more A\* to C grade GCSE's, including mathematics and English, was 59.6% in 2011 (national average 58.9%). The proportion of people with NVQ level 3 and above is 46.4%, which is below the national rate.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Margaret Hobson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the company's head of quality and standards 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, visits and online 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: [learnerview@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:learnerview@ofsted.gov.uk)

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

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