

# St Helens Chamber Limited

## Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		10-14 December 2012
Overall effectiveness	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Programmes designed to meet the needs of unemployed adults are very effective in progressing them to employment, education or further training.
- The very large majority of learners benefit from teaching, learning and assessment that are of a good quality.
- The provision is very effectively targeted at disadvantaged residents and makes a good contribution to reducing unemployment and the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- The quality of the support to help learners overcome barriers to their success is very good.
- The quality of accommodation and resources benefitting learners is very good.
- Partnership working is particularly well used to develop the provision to meet learners' needs

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Success rates, although significantly improved, are not yet sufficiently high across all groups of learners.
- The variations that exist between the success rates of some groups of learners have not narrowed at a sufficiently fast pace.
- The observation of teaching and learning process is not sufficiently developed to improve teaching, learning and assessment to outstanding.
- The board does not receive sufficiently detailed performance reports to inform them in their role of support and challenge.
- Opportunities are missed in teaching sessions and progress reviews to further develop learners' knowledge of equality and diversity

## Full report

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

- Increase the number of outstanding teaching, learning and assessment sessions by further developing lesson observations to better inform staff development and promote the sharing of good practice.
- Ensure that all progress reviews give learners specific and measurable targets to contribute to increasing success rates further within planned timescales.
- Frequently analyse and use management information on learner outcomes to identify performance by a wide range of characteristics and devise actions to ensure the rapid narrowing of any identified gaps.
- Frequently provide the board with appropriately detailed learner performance data to enable them to provide rigorous support and challenge.
- Ensure that staff receive good on-going training and support, equipping them to make the best use of opportunities in training and progress reviews to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- Following good success rates on Train to Gain programmes with the very large majority of learners completing within planned timescales, success rates on apprenticeships were low in 2010/11. St Helen's Chamber (the Chamber) quickly identified the reasons for this and implemented a range of actions to remedy the situation. Consequently success rates for apprenticeships have improved but are not yet sufficiently above national averages to be good.
- The pre-apprenticeship 'work ready' provision, introduced as part of the measures to improve apprenticeship success rates is proving to be very effective with good progression rates into apprenticeships or other further training and education.
- The 'New Skills' provision, designed to meet the needs of unemployed adults, is also very effective with the large majority of learners successfully achieving their qualifications. Of the 1200 learners during 2011/12, over 40% progressed into either employment, education or further training.
- The Chamber is strongly focused on recruiting learners from disadvantaged post code areas and many learners have low prior attainment. The progress of learners in the classes observed by inspectors was mostly good or better. The monitoring of current apprenticeship progress shows most apprentices to be making at least satisfactory progress towards completing their apprenticeships in the planned timescales.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and apply these to the benefit of their employers and customers. For example, one health and social care apprentice used research on pressure sores to identify and report pressure sores on a service user and be thoroughly involved in the discussion to decide appropriate treatment.
- The Chamber has a strong focus on preparing learners for employability and the high expectations set for attendance, punctuality, dress code and behaviour are appreciated by learners. One learner commented that the employability training during her three-week work ready programme had been crucial in helping her to be successful at interview.
- There are still variations between the success rates for different cohorts of apprentices and whilst actions to reduce these are proving effective they are not all reducing at a sufficiently fast pace.

- Overall the rate of progression between intermediate and advanced apprenticeships is satisfactory. However, whilst anecdotal evidence indicates some good examples of apprentices gaining promotion in their workplaces after completing their apprenticeships the Chamber recognises that this is not systematically collected and is currently developing a process to collect more extensive destinations data.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through effective use of lesson observation, staff training, the sharing of good practice and rigorous performance management is a key quality driver for the Chamber. The large majority of lessons are now good or better although only a minority are outstanding. However, these improvements are too recent to have raised success rates for apprentices to good. The process for lesson observation is currently being further developed to reflect changes to the Common Inspection framework.
- The Chambers' specialist advice and guidance centre is used very effectively to ensure that learners are on the most appropriate programme. The pre-apprenticeship 'work ready' programme ensures that learners aged 16-18 are offered either an apprenticeship or a foundation programme following a three week employability training period. Job matching is very effective in ensuring learners' and employers' needs are met at the start of an apprenticeship.
- Apprentices receive good coaching and support from training advisers who have extensive knowledge of their occupational areas. On- and off-the-job training is well co-ordinated although not always sufficiently recorded during progress reviews.
- Learners attending the Chamber for classroom-based learning benefit from very high quality accommodation, equipment and resources. Unemployed adults on the 'New Skills' programme quickly develop independent learning skills and are able to carry out research using the Internet competently. The construction centre provides good quality accommodation and resources for learners to develop basic construction skills.
- During the pre-apprenticeship 'work ready' programme learners develop good employability skills through a very effective blend of practical activities, underpinned by theoretical concepts. For example, in preparation for a social enterprise project leading to small group presentations learners were introduced to the work of Belbin regarding team members' roles and identified their role within the team activities.
- The development of learners' functional skills is good. Although still working towards their functional skills qualifications, training advisers provide good support for their learners and contextualise the learning well. Following initial assessment some learners complete their skills at a level higher than required for their apprenticeship.
- Attention to and the promotion of health and safety is strong. Learners in the construction centre show good understanding of how to work safely and routinely wear the correct personal protective equipment. In classrooms equipped with computers learners routinely check their computing equipment and adjustable chair positioning to ensure safe working practices are adhered to.
- Assessment practices are good, utilising a wide range of assessment methods and making good use of information technology. Assessment is planned to ensure best use is made of the opportunities available. Verbal feedback following assessment is constructive helping learners to develop and progress. However, too few learners routinely access their e-portfolios for the written feedback available through it.
- Support for learners is very good. For apprentices most support is provided initially by their training advisers who have good materials and resources to help them provide the necessary support. More extensive support is available if needed and this makes very good use of strong partnership working to provide specialist expertise. The impact of this support is closely

monitored and the large majority receiving it are retained on the programme and go on to successfully achieve their programmes.

- The monitoring of learners' progress is frequent leading to clear and effective action plans for learners identified as at risk of not achieving. However, progress reviews are less effective in this process and often the targets set for learners are insufficiently specific, time bound or measurable to make their full contribution to learner progress. Some employers are insufficiently directly involved in the review process.
- Learners show a good understanding of safeguarding and how to remain safe when using the Internet. Induction is used well to promote and develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity and staff have appropriate training and professional development to develop their own understanding. However, during progress reviews and in some lessons opportunities are missed to further develop and deepen learner understanding.

## Health and social care

### Apprenticeships Employability

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good but, while success rates have significantly improved, outcomes for learners still require improvement. Learners develop good knowledge, skills and understanding of topics. They effectively develop and apply their learning in the workplace where they share their knowledge and skills with co-workers.
- Progression between programmes is good. High numbers of intermediate learners successfully progress to advanced-level apprenticeships. They also gain promotion and additional responsibility in the workplace as a result of their apprenticeships.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are used very effectively to place learners on a programme suited to their needs and abilities. Requirements of the programme and the level of commitment expected from learners are clearly identified and explained. During induction, training advisers provide detailed and accurate information, advice and guidance.
- Planning and delivery of teaching and learning are good overall. Training advisers have in-depth knowledge of the health and social care sector and they carefully match learning to learners' needs. Learners receive high levels of support from their training advisers, developing their confidence and leading to good progress.
- Off-the-job training is supported by a large range of good-quality learning materials that are used effectively. Training materials, such as workbooks and e-learning packages, successfully develop learners' independent study and research skills. Resources are routinely shared among staff to support good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teaching and learning are skilfully planned and provide good opportunities for assessment. Assessment is planned collaboratively between learners and training advisers and assessment plans clearly identify what learners are expected to achieve. Oral feedback is accurate and detailed but many learners do not routinely access the written feedback that is uploaded to the e-portfolio system.
- Monthly meetings of training advisers and managers effectively monitor the consistency of assessment. Close monitoring of learners' progress ensures that those who are not progressing at the expected rate are quickly identified and supported so they complete their programme within the predicted period.
- Progress reviews are frequent and generally they monitor progress, key issues and concerns effectively. However, reviews are not sufficiently focused on timely progress and action planning, and actions are not sufficiently time bound or specific. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the review process.

- Development of learners' functional skills is good. Learners are challenged to work at as high a level as possible. For example, if intermediate apprentices are capable of working at level 2, they receive good encouragement to do so.

<b>Administration</b>	Good
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	
<b>Employability</b>	

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, although this is not fully reflected in learners' success rates in 2011/12. However, retention has improved significantly from the same period last year and success rates also indicate an improving trend. Learners quickly develop good workplace skills and they make effective contributions to their workplaces.
- Learners receive good training and coaching from the training advisers who use their extensive business experience to engage and motivate learners. Business enterprise sessions for the unemployed are particularly inspirational, challenging learners to plan their businesses realistically and cost-effectively. Good coaching sessions in the workplace meet apprentices' individual needs.
- Training advisers plan off-the-job training skilfully, taking account of learners' ability and levels of confidence. Lessons take place in the Chamber's modern and well-equipped learning environment. Although most lessons include a good variety of practical tasks, where there is too much training adviser input learners are insufficiently challenged and learning is not adequately assessed.
- Apprentices apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills confidently in the workplace. They make a valued contribution to their workplaces and many take on wider responsibilities or gain promotion. Learners aged 16 to 18 quickly learn how to behave professionally with colleagues and customers.
- Assessment practices are good. Training advisers use a wide range of assessment methods and they make good use of technology for recording discussions and tracking progress. Learners benefit from the constructive feedback they receive and know how they can improve.
- Initial assessment is particularly effective in identifying learners' support and training needs and ensuring they are placed on programmes at the correct level. Apprentices receive very good individual support for literacy and numeracy. Learners who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship programme receive good preparation for employment through a pre-apprenticeship course and this is particularly beneficial to learners with few prior qualifications and limited educational experience.
- Progress reviews are comprehensive, thorough and particularly effective when employers attend. The electronic tracking system clearly measures learners' progress towards the NVQ, and learners and employers know what needs to be completed. However, the planning and recording of workplace training and learning in reviews is insufficient, and targets are too focused on assessment rather than on the required learning.
- Learners' functional skills development is good. They are using good speaking and listening skills, expressing their ideas articulately and becoming proficient at using mathematics for costing and invoicing. Training advisers, who are working towards gaining functional skills qualifications, receive good support from functional skills champions.
- Initial advice and guidance are very effective. Induction is thorough and prepares learners for their programme. Learners receive good guidance on selecting suitable optional units which are closely aligned to their jobs and career aspirations.
- Learners have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. However, equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted during teaching, training and reviews to reinforce, deepen and challenge learners' knowledge and understanding.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- The Chamber's clear strategic direction for 2012/15 is presented in a comprehensive three-year business and strategic plan. The Chamber is highly committed to providing training for young people not in education, employment or training and for people who are long-term unemployed. Learners are given very good opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need for personal development and to enable them to contribute to the economic prosperity of the region.
- When success rate underperformance arose eighteen months ago following the move from Train to Gain to apprenticeships decisive action was taken. The curriculum offer was reviewed and a short pre-apprenticeship 'work ready' programme introduced for all potential apprentices aged 16-18. Some aspects of staff underperformance were effectively managed with some new staff recruited in early 2012.
- The Chamber works hard to improve success rates through rigorous performance management of training advisers. Learners' progress is thoroughly reviewed each month when training advisers and team leaders meet for that purpose. Slower than expected progress is quickly identified and strategies are implemented to ensure progress is accelerated and learners complete their programme within the expected time period.
- Overall, teaching, learning and assessment are good. The Chamber has invested heavily in technology. Teaching and learning resources are efficiently managed and accommodation is excellent. The identification and sharing of best practice, to enhance further the quality of the provision, is strongly encouraged but not yet fully implemented. Although on-going professional development opportunities are good, too few tutors have functional skills qualifications and a diploma, or equivalent qualification, for teaching in the lifelong learning sector.
- Through its self-assessment process, the Chamber has a good overview of the provision's current strengths and areas that require improvement. The self-assessment process is systematic and involves training staff at all levels, beginning with an annual planning event. Relevant information from employer, learner and staff surveys also contributes to the self-assessment report. However, the self-assessment process is not fully inclusive because not all partners are sufficiently consulted, and board members are unaware of some strengths and required improvements.
- An extensive range of management information is available to team leaders and managers. However, the information is not always thoroughly interrogated to ascertain, for example, the reasons for learners withdrawing, why achievement gaps are occurring and to compare current and past years' success rates. Since strengthening the performance management process retention has improved, more learners are completing within the planned period and the tracking of learners' progress has significantly improved.
- Good progress has been made in aligning the process for observing teaching and learning with the 2012 Common Inspection Framework. Provision has been made for observing all aspects of the learners' journeys using quality statements that are specific, for example, to induction, progress reviews and one-to-one coaching. However, in some instances written feedback to observed tutors is insufficiently incisive and key strengths and areas requiring improvement are not always clearly identified.
- The Chamber has excellent relationships with member companies and a wide range of partners. Its unique position enables it to liaise with small, medium and large employers and to identify job vacancies for apprentices and learners completing the 'work ready' programme. The Chamber and its partners, for example, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, local academies and colleges, work collaboratively and extremely effectively to provide learners with suitable vocational training routes.
- The apprenticeship programme is particularly successful in attracting a wide range of learners, including those from areas of high deprivation and with varying levels of educational success.

For learners who are not yet ready to join an apprenticeship programme, the three-week intensive or 12-week extended 'work ready' programmes provides excellent preparation for employment. As the Chamber is aware, the range of vocational areas within the apprenticeship provision, for example leisure and tourism, and logistics, could be extended. Progression opportunities in construction are limited.

- The Chamber's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet the statutory requirements. Learners feel safe and staff have received appropriate training in how to recognise and report any safeguarding concerns.
- Learners and staff are treated fairly, courteously and respectfully and any incidents of bullying or discrimination are dealt with immediately. Staff training is satisfactory. Training advisers do not always increase learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity in learning sessions and by asking suitably challenging questions in progress reviews.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Health and social care</b>	2
<b>Administration</b>	2

## Provider details

<b>St Helens Chamber Limited</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Not for profit organisation
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	1793
	2011/12
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Kath Boullen
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 December 2006
<b>Website address</b>	www.sthelenschamber.com



<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>						
<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+
	68	136	4	131	0	0
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	260					
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency					

## Additional socio-economic information

The Chamber is situated in St Helens, one of the five districts of Merseyside, and has a population of around 175,000. St Helens is ranked the 47<sup>th</sup> most deprived authority in England with 27 Super Output Areas falling into the most deprived 10% nationally. Unemployment rates and the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training are higher than both national and regional averages. The proportion of the population who have no qualifications is slightly higher than found nationally. Around 47% hold qualifications at advanced level, below the regional average and six percentage points below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSE's at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is three percentage points below national averages.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mike White HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the quality development adviser 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 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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