

PDM Training and Consultancy

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		23–27 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Inadequate-4
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:

- Outcomes for learners are not good enough, and those for apprentices are inadequate.
- Apprentices make slow progress in completing the English and mathematics elements of their qualifications.
- Assessors do not make good use of information about learners' starting points when planning learning and assessment. Those learners requiring additional help with their learning, or who have English as an additional language, are not well supported to achieve their qualifications.
- Trainers and assessors do not provide sufficient challenge to enable apprentices to work independently or to develop high-order thinking and research skills.
- Not all assessors and trainers are sufficiently qualified or confident to correct learners' spelling and grammar mistakes, or to include routine mathematics calculations in training sessions.
- Managers do not monitor the performance of learners adequately in subcontracted provision.
- Managers have been slow to provide sufficiently well targeted training to ensure that all assessors are able to support apprentices in completing their qualification successfully.
- Measures to observe training and assessment sessions are ineffective in ensuring high-quality learning.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Particularly effective partnerships with employers ensure that learners receive tailored training that is closely aligned to the business needs of their workplace.
- Many learners develop good vocational and social skills, and increased confidence in their ability to work with a wide range of clients.
- Communication within the organisation is effective at all levels.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the first time pass rates for all apprentices in English and mathematics tests, by ensuring assessors have the knowledge, skills and confidence in their own ability to develop and extend learners' English and mathematics skills; and ensure that all assessors routinely correct learners' spelling and grammar mistakes.
- Monitor apprentices' progress and performance more effectively at all stages of their learning, to support the completion of high-quality training within planned timescales.
- Improve standards of teaching, learning and assessment by developing all assessors' skills as vocationally competent and qualified trainers; and by more rigorous identification of areas for improvement in their practice and staff development needs through the observation of training and assessment
- Make better use of the assessment of learners' prior ability to inform the planning of individual learning, and to provide accurate targeted support for those identified as requiring additional help to complete their qualifications.
- Ensure that apprentices, especially those at level 3, develop the advanced independent working and research skills required for progression into further study and employment, by setting them more challenging tasks and work outside lessons.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
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- The proportion of apprentices who complete their qualifications successfully in the time expected is low, and significantly so when compared to rates for similar providers. Success rates declined dramatically in 2012/13, having been around national rates previously. Apprentices make slow progress in completing the English and mathematics elements of their programme. Too few learners acquire these essential skills which might assist them to secure further employment and/or to enhance career progression.
- Learners who have low prior entry qualifications, as well as those for whom English is an additional language, often struggle to acquire the knowledge and skills to complete their qualifications successfully. Pass rates for external tests have improved substantially, but are now only at around the national rate.
- Adult care learners studying in the workplace achieve well and develop good skills. They acquire a better understanding of how they can effectively improve their standards of service, and the care they provide for clients. In 2012/13, learners studying engineering qualifications directly with PDM succeeded extremely well and achieved high success rates.
- The overall performance of the majority of learners working towards employability qualifications with PDM's subcontractor was poor and their rate of progression to sustained employment was low. PDM no longer contracts out this provision and all current learners are making very good progress.
- Significant variations in achievement exist within programmes between male and female learners, for those aged 16 to 18 and older learners, and between learners from different ethnic groups. Those learners with a declared additional learning need do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Learners enjoy their learning and many relish the opportunity to enhance and develop their skills. For example, a learner in a care home extended her knowledge of handling and turning patients by carefully documenting the joints of the body and explaining expertly in detail which

actions were most beneficial to a bed-bound client. However, assessors fail to challenge routinely the more able learners to extend their skills further, and to prepare them sufficiently for higher levels of study.

- Good vocational partnerships with a wide range of employers and regional authorities help learners on employability programmes gain valuable practical and job-related skills. The quality of learners' work is generally of a satisfactory standard and tasks and activities set for them link well to their everyday employment. Many learners improve their understanding of their chosen career path and the opportunities available to them.
- Learners develop an adequate understanding of equality and awareness of diversity through their studies, and are mutually supportive and respectful of each other and their assessors when working together. Learners develop good knowledge and awareness of how to keep themselves, and those in their care, safe.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires further improvement because it varies too much; too little is good or better. Teaching, learning and assessment are good for learners on employability training and for those learners studying within the workplace, who are in the minority, but require improvement for most of the much larger cohort of apprentices. Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate for apprentices working towards business qualifications.
- Teaching and learning are strongest when assessors have a good understanding of the employer's business, and use their industry experience effectively to teach apprentices new and relevant work skills. However, not all assessors do this consistently well, and too many rely on generic workbooks which do not sufficiently develop role-specific skills.
- The previous inspection found the development of learners' English and mathematical skills to be insufficient to prepare them adequately for the requirements of the workplace, or to enable them to progress to further study. This remains the case; too many apprentices make slow progress in completing this element of their qualification. Too few assessors are sufficiently qualified or confident to support learners in developing these essential skills. Many make mistakes in their own corrections to learners' work or fail to identify basic errors in grammar and spelling.
- Staff do not always prepare employers to be actively involved with planning and reviewing the progress of their apprentices. In these instances, assessors often fail to link what apprentices do and learn at work with the activities they need to complete to achieve their qualifications. A few learners lose their focus and make slow progress because visits from assessors are too infrequent, or changes to assessors delay the start of their programme.
- Training in the workplace is good. Workplace supervisors provide learners with high-quality individual coaching, resulting in learners making good progress in developing effective practical skills. For example, supervisors supported a business management learner in learning how to use an embroidery machine; the learner was subsequently involved in the major purchase of a superior replacement machine, leading to improved factory output.
- For unemployed learners, teaching and learning are good. Trainers provide carefully planned, enjoyable and stimulating learning that matches learners' individual needs well. Trainers have good relevant industrial experience, are enthusiastic and make good links to work. As a result, learners are motivated and many succeed in finding long-term employment.
- Assessment of learners' abilities before starting their programme is satisfactory; however, in too many cases, assessors do not use the results sufficiently well to plan programmes of learning. Personalised learning plans do not clearly link to learners' practical everyday duties at work, or incorporate the training they will receive in their workplace. Targets for improving English and mathematics are insufficient to enable most learners to improve.
- Learners who require additional support to complete their qualification often do not succeed as well or as quickly as they might, because assessors do not provide sufficiently targeted help to

enable them to do so. A few learners who do not have English as a first language now receive better support, but it is too soon to measure the impact of this on the likelihood of them achieving their qualification.

- Training resources are satisfactory overall. Helpful, well-produced workbooks provide useful resources for learners on employability programmes. PDM is working hard to enhance learning through the newly-installed virtual learning environment (VLE). Inspectors agreed with PDM's own self-assessment that trainers and assessors currently make insufficient use of technology to make learning more lively and interesting.
- Information, advice and guidance are not an integral part of learning for apprentices. However, they form a strong feature of employability training, where learning plans effectively guide learners into employment and make them aware of the potential career routes within their chosen vocation.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and an awareness of diversity, but assessors do not always encourage them to explore cultural differences and attitudes. For example, in one review, a learner recalled a conversation he had about faith with his employer; however, instead of pursuing and extending the discussion, the assessor quickly moved on to another subject. In a minority of training sessions, trainers do not always challenge learners when they make negative stereotypical statements.

Health and social care

Apprenticeships

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement; this is reflected in low success rates on most courses. Apprentices make slow progress in completing the English and mathematics elements of their qualification. Learners develop good practical vocational skills leading to increased responsibilities in their workplaces. For example, level 2 apprentices take on key worker responsibilities on completing their qualification. Learners develop increased confidence in their ability to perform their job and the standard of most learners' work meets the requirements of their qualifications.
- Assessors do not make good enough use of the wide-range of learners' work settings, or the breadth of tasks learners undertake in their daily work, to extend their learning. Assessors adhere rigidly to the qualification framework and do not use naturally-occurring learning opportunities to challenge and stimulate learners. A significant minority spend too much time marking module workbooks during assessment visits, rather than training learners and deepening their understanding of their work.
- Assessors know their learners well and adapt their assessment strategies effectively to meet individual learners' personal needs. For example, they arrange training sessions around learners' childcare and other domestic caring responsibilities. Employers speak highly of the support provided and how it enables learners to remain focused on completing their qualification.
- Assessors do not always have sufficiently high expectations for their learners. They do not encourage the more able learners to develop their ideas fully, for example through extended writing or researching around a specific aspect of caring for elderly clients. Most level 3 apprentices do not produce work which they have referenced appropriately or in sufficient detail to prepare them well for higher education or for working at senior management level.
- Assessors do not use learners' initial starting points sufficiently well to develop their training plans. Learners who have English as an additional language, or have been identified as needing help to complete their qualification, do not receive the support they require. These learners make slow progress and a few repeatedly take, and fail, English and mathematics tests.
- Assessors do not focus on English and mathematics sufficiently within vocational sessions to enable learners to make necessary improvements to their written English or mathematical skills.

Not all learners are sufficiently able to complete legal documents, such as care plans and risk assessments. Assessors do not routinely correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar; as a result, learners are not helped to work to the appropriate professional standard.

- Staff do not provide adequate advice and guidance for learners on completion of their qualifications. Most learners do not have sufficient opportunity during their studies to explore potential career opportunities and how they might fulfil their ambitions. On nearing completion of their qualification, learners are not encouraged to set goals and targets relating to their future career plans.
- The promotion of an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion is adequate and learners demonstrate a good understanding of the needs and rights of service users. However, assessors do not routinely use the diverse range of clients' needs which learners encounter at work to enhance their knowledge. Discussions of equality and diversity at formal reviews are cursory and fail to reinforce and extend learning.

Preparation for life and work

Good

Employability training

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the high number of learners achieving relevant vocational qualifications in the current year. Learners make significant improvements in their personal and social skills and confidence and develop a good range of work-related skills in warehousing and in taxi driving. Most learners produce work of a good standard. Learners' attendance and punctuality are good, reflecting clearly their enjoyment of learning.
- Learners value, and greatly benefit from, working with trainers who have excellent experience and knowledge of the industries in which learners are planning to gain employment. Trainers draw on their experience extensively to make the learning both interesting and relevant. Learners in warehousing and storage have good opportunities to develop their employment-related skills further, through sampling different job roles in a large and fast-paced warehouse.
- Learners improve their skills and confidence through their use of presentations to trainers and employers, role plays related to employment and good use of practical and problem-solving activities. For example, in learning about taxi driving, a very effective practical activity involved each learner in loading and securing a wheelchair occupied by a volunteer user, into a specially-adapted working taxi, with instruction from an experienced, specialist taxi driver.
- The use of learning resources is good overall. Learners find the well-produced workbooks helpful and informative. Training takes place in spacious learning environments, which learners find welcoming and supportive of their learning. Trainers' assessment of learning in lessons is of variable quality, with some effective use of questioning. However, occasionally their teaching methods allow a minority of learners to dominate, with other learners not getting sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- All learners have an assessment of their English and mathematics skills. However, trainers do not make sufficient use of this information in order to plan learning which meets the differing needs of learners effectively. Assessment practice in relation to external qualifications is good.
- The development of learners' speaking and listening skills is good, but learners do not develop their writing skills sufficiently well, for example in their workbooks and portfolios. Trainers' feedback is insufficient to enable learners to be clear about how they can improve their punctuation and spelling; trainers are not sufficiently skilled or qualified to do this. The incorporation of mathematics into training is more effective. For example, taxi drivers' training involves learners working out complex tariffs and fares directly relevant to their future work.
- Care, support, advice, and guidance are good for learners. On warehousing courses, open days enable learners to identify prior to enrolment whether this subject might be an area of potential

interest and employment for them. Support for individual learners, both during courses and in relation to their progression, is good.

- Learners demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and respect for each other and for the trainers. Female learners, who are in a minority, feel welcomed and fully included in all aspects of the training. On the taxi driving training, staff focus well on developing learners' understanding equality and diversity, and they develop a clear appreciation of key issues in relation to their future employment in this industry. However, the promotion of these topics to learners in warehousing and storage is only satisfactory.

Business management and administration

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate, and this is reflected in learners' outcomes which are low. Although improving, too few learners complete their qualifications within planned timescales and not enough are successful in completing the English and mathematics elements of their qualification.
- Learners develop confidence in the use of spreadsheets to calculate sales of products and services, learning how to use formulae and formatting skills appropriately. However, they make limited progress in developing their personal, learning and thinking skills required for team working and problem solving. Learners are not aware of the need to develop these crucial skills to enable them to enhance their chances of success in the workplace. Learners often have to wait too long between assessor visits which are too infrequent, and therefore lose their commitment to learning.
- Assessors talk too much during training, with the result that learners are largely passive, become bored and gain little new knowledge. Assessors do not check learners' understanding effectively. They make insufficient use of questioning to probe learners' knowledge or to check their learning, allowing a few talkative learners to dominate. Assessors fail to develop learners' independent learning skills or to stretch and challenge them through the tasks and activities they set.
- Assessment of learning is weak. While verbal feedback is adequate and benefits learners' understanding, the recording of this feedback is insufficient to enable learners to make the progress of which they are capable. Assessors' written feedback does not always set out clearly what learners need to do, or set specific targets to assist learners to achieve well. Assessors do not routinely correct grammar and poor punctuation, and make frequent errors in their own writing when commenting on learners' work.
- The majority of assessors do not use learners' individual learning plans effectively to monitor and track progress, and most learners are unaware of the targets they have been set to complete. As a result, they miss valuable opportunities to achieve their full apprenticeship qualification in a timely fashion. Trainers do not set targets and follow-up actions which encourage learners to become more independent in their learning. Assessors rarely involve employers in reviewing apprentices' learning or progress, and many employers are not aware of how they could better support their employees to succeed.
- A minority of assessors make skilful use of discussions linked to individual learners' job roles to develop their employability skills, such as motivating fellow workers to improve their performance. Although they have a good rapport with their learners, assessors do not always motivate or encourage them to develop and improve their study skills, for example by taking study notes and accurately proof reading their work.
- Trainers make adequate use of the findings from the assessment of learners' ability to inform learning and identify the required level of study in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). While learners understand the importance of developing these

skills, most do not receive sufficient training to develop their skills sufficiently; those who have English as an additional language or who require additional study support achieve poorly.

- Promotion by assessors of the understanding of equality and diversity is insufficient. Because of this, learners have limited understanding of wider aspects of equality and diversity, and of how important this understanding is to good customer relations and providing high quality levels of service. In progress reviews, assessors make superficial references to equality and diversity, lacking confidence in their skills to do this well. Learners feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns about their safety.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The performance of PDM has declined since the previous inspection and now requires improvement. After a period in which learners' success rates were satisfactory, they declined dramatically in 2012/13 to an unacceptably low rate. However, learners' progress and success rates have started to improve again in 2013/14, reversing the previously steep decline.
- PDM has a vision to provide high-quality training. A recently restructured management team, with clear roles and responsibilities, is implementing a well-considered and detailed change process to improve the quality of the learning experience. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact on improving the quality of learners' training, learning and assessment.
- Staff have a good understanding of the need to improve learners' success rates. Communication is good, with frequent formal and informal contact between all managers and staff who work closely with learners. Managers now use information and data more effectively than previously to discuss the progress of individual learners with their teams, although they do not always analyse sufficiently the reasons for disparities in performance between different groups of learners.
- The management of subcontracted provision has been poor resulting in low success rates for learners. After taking decisive action, PDM terminated the agreement with the subcontractor and progress for current learners is now very good.
- A small minority of assessors responsible for supporting learners in developing their English and mathematics skills are not sufficiently qualified or confident to do so. Therefore, they rely too much on a computerised programme to develop these skills, and are unable to support those learners who require discrete teaching to complete their studies in a timely manner.
- While performance management measures are well established, they have not been sufficiently effective in ensuring all assessors develop their skills and competences as trainers to support the requirements of the apprenticeship qualification more effectively. For example, a few assessors are not appropriately qualified and/or are still working towards a qualification in English and/or mathematics.
- The way in which managers carry out observations of training sessions does not help staff to develop the skills necessary to ensure learners gain the knowledge and skills which they require to make rapid improvements in learning. Observers tend to focus on what trainers are doing, rather than on what learners are able to do because of their training, leading to an over-estimation of the quality of the training. Managers rarely analyse the findings from the observation process appropriately in order to inform subsequent training needs for staff.
- Managers have particularly productive partnerships with employers and regional authorities that enrich learners' opportunities to develop their future employment prospects. Employers speak highly of their working relationship with PDM and the benefits resulting from the flexible and tailored training provided. One such partnership, with a national supplier of car components, has resulted in the local authority providing a public bus service to enable learners on employability programmes to reach their workplace training.
- Staff review all aspects of the provision through self-assessment of performance, including the work of subcontractors in partnership arrangements. While managers accurately identified a

number of key strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors, the self-assessment report does not yet sufficiently focus on the quality of training, learning and assessment.

- Mutual tolerance and respect permeate the organisation. However, managers do not always ensure that staff promote equality and celebrate diversity sufficiently with learners and employers and a minority of assessors are insufficiently confident during reviews to discuss naturally occurring themes with learners in ways that might further extend learning.
- PDM meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learning. Safeguarding procedures ensure managers focus appropriately on the safety and wellbeing of their learners. Managers deal promptly and effectively with any incidents that occur and involve the relevant agencies when appropriate.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd.**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	-
Outcomes for learners	4	-	-	-	-	3	4	3	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3
Employability training	2
Administration	4
Business management	4

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,879							
Principal/CEO	Mr Peter Moody							
Date of previous inspection	April 2011							
Website address	www.pdmtc.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	741	-	13	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	74	1,084	12	1,001	-		4	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	229							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Elite Assessors Limited							

Contextual information

PDM Training and Consultancy Ltd (PDM), founded in 2000, provides a range of training and consultancy services nationally to both the public and private sector. PDM's business support centre and head office is in Andover, Hampshire. Public sector work includes contracts held with the Ministry of Defence for apprentice training for the Army, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. Through its Skills Funding Agency work, PDM provides training to employers in the areas of security, health, social care, business management, business administration, logistics, and passenger transportation. In partnership with Jobcentre Plus, PDM offers employability programmes in health and social care, passenger transport and warehousing. Most current learners are aged 19 or over, and are from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. In 2013, PDM agreed through the Skills Funding Agency to take responsibility for completing the training of some 1,400 apprentices formerly trained by Pearson in Practice.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Julie Steele HMI
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Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the head of training operations division 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 past 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 relevant 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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