

# Unique Training (North East) Limited

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		9-12 September 2014
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider requires improvement because:

- learners on a minority of courses leave before completing their qualification
- the timing of English, mathematics and functional skills assessments slows learning and achievement for a significant minority of learners. Learners that are more able do not have sufficient opportunities to extend their achievement in English and mathematics
- managers' analysis of performance data is insufficiently critical or timely. As a result, they do not implement changes quickly enough to improve provision
- the current leadership team has not implemented fully the changes needed to quality assurance arrangements and this is hindering progress in raising the quality of provision for learners
- targets in the quality improvement plan are insufficiently robust, resulting in managers not being able to measure or evaluate the impact of any progress made.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- a high number of apprentices in hospitality and catering, and administration and business management, the majority of provision, complete their programme in good time
- coaching and assessment practice are very good, reflecting the high number of apprentices who successfully gain qualifications
- learners enjoy their studies and develop valuable skills while in work. Employers value the training that learners receive, and say they get very capable and enthusiastic employees as a result
- a large majority of learners have gained sustainable employment, moved on to higher-level courses or have been promoted at work
- the curriculum provides well for the needs of the region, in particular for employees wanting to progress into management roles.

## Full report

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

- Adjust the timing of English, mathematics and functional skills assessments so that learners, especially the more able, make progress.
- Increase the rigour of self-assessment by ensuring that learners, employers and staff fully participate in the process to identify accurately key areas of strength and further development to improve outcomes for learners.
- Ensure that the quality improvement plan identifies specific targets with achievable timescales, to allow managers to monitor the progress of improvement activities.
- Implement a quality assurance system and increase the use of data so that managers can analyse learner performance and make effective decisions that improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unique Training provides apprenticeship training for learners over the age of 16 at levels 2, 3 and 4. The majority of apprenticeships are in hospitality and catering, with a smaller number of apprentices following programmes in administration and business management, and customer service.</li> <li>▪ Success rates for apprentices are above the national rate. A large majority of learners are successful in their studies and make good progress, completing their studies within planned timescales. Improved target setting for achievement and increasingly regular reviews by training coordinators have increased the number of learners who gain qualifications. However, a small number of apprentices, particularly in administration and business management, leave before completing their qualification, or do not finish in time. The number of successful intermediate-level apprentices increased significantly in the past year, as a result of training coordinator interventions.</li> <li>▪ There are no significant differences in achievement of male and female apprentices. There are too few apprentices from minority ethnic groups to make a judgement. For the small number of apprentices that require additional learning support their achievement is equal to that of their peers.</li> <li>▪ Most learners increase their confidence and skills in English and mathematics. Many benefit greatly from individualised support, based on the outcomes of detailed initial assessments. Learners have a good understanding of how their skills in English and mathematics help them to deal with communication and problem solving at work and in their everyday lives. For a small minority of learners, support to develop English and mathematics comes too late in their programme and this slows their progress and achievement. Tutor coordinators do not challenge more able learners consistently enough to develop further their skills in English and mathematics.</li> <li>▪ Learners have positive attitudes to their work. They work well with their training coordinators to demonstrate what they have learned. Learners show good knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques they need to work in hospitality and catering, and business management and administration. Consequently, they contribute well as employees, and deal effectively with the demands of their work. However, for a few learners, their training coordinators and employers do not sufficiently link targets for achievement to the development and assessment of skills in their workplaces.</li> </ul>	

- Enrichment activities, such as financial management, and working with the elderly to develop their information technology (IT) and social media skills, enable many learners to identify how they can apply their developing skills in a range of situations. This helps learners to recognise fully their potential and make good progress into employment, promotion at work and further training. Employers, managers and supervisors speak highly of their apprentices. They value the skills and expertise that their learners develop and apply as a result of their training.
- Retail, hospitality and catering and business learners follow training programmes that prepare them well for their work; they grow in confidence and are motivated to succeed. Consequently, they enjoy their training, develop highly effective personal and social skills, and improve their employment opportunities.
- A newly introduced system for monitoring learners at risk of not completing their programmes has increased achievement and retention. However, not all training coordinators are using the system consistently well by, for example, using end-of-course dates to keep all learners on track. Learners benefit from good care and support from their training coordinators and employers to resolve potential problems and continue their studies.

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

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Consequently, the majority of learners achieve their qualifications through good support and training from training coordinators and employers. Assessment practice is very good reflecting the high numbers of apprentices who successfully gain qualifications, particularly the improvement in the number of intermediate 16- to 18-year-old learners in hospitality and catering who have been successful during the current year. Training coordinators and employers have high expectations of their apprentices whom they challenge to develop their practical skills and progress quickly. Hospitality learners, for example, develop high-level cookery skills as part of planned career progression to support learning at the next level.
- Training coordinators demonstrate good skills and use a good range of teaching methods that learners enjoy. In coaching sessions, many training coordinators make effective use of on-line video resources, such as showing methods to avoid cross-contamination when handling food. These resources enable learners to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in and out of the workplace.
- Training coordinators give learners challenging work that greatly increases their readiness for employment and promotion. As a result, most learners value their training. Employers and learners recognise good development in vocational skills and importantly broader aspects, such as learners' enthusiasm and thoughtfulness. The great majority of learners feel they have improved significantly in their work roles.
- Learners develop good independent learning skills through effective coaching and support. Training coordinators set tasks that require research to complete, and review and mark these effectively. They give effective feedback to learners on corrections and improvements that they could make to their work. Learners' work is well presented and mostly of good quality. However, training coordinators do not check all work sufficiently for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar so that learners are able to improve their use of English in their written work later on.
- Most learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and feel well supported by staff. Learners have access to advice and support about e-safety and cyber-bullying. They understand and can explain key elements of on-line safety. Training coordinators include safeguarding in reviews and coaching sessions, and check carefully for understanding. For example, during a review hospitality learners were able to explain in depth how they would tackle harassment by customers.
- Training coordinators have good industry experience. They use their skills expertly to plan and deliver programmes that meet learners' needs. This ensures learners develop the skills they need to be effective employees.

- Induction and initial assessment are good. Learners feel they have a sound understanding of what is required of them. For most, initial assessment leads to effective action planning for English, mathematics and additional support needs. Appropriate support is available when required; however, training coordinators pay insufficient attention to the needs of a few learners for example, extending achievement in English and mathematics for more able learners.
- Assessment practice is good. Training coordinators use a wide range of evidence during frequent visits and set clear targets for the next visit. As a result, most learners understand how to improve. Training coordinators ask probing questions to test and develop learners' understanding. Many learners benefit from using e-portfolios and digitally recorded assessments because they can see easily how well they are doing and this keeps them motivated.
- Reviews of progress are good for most learners, particularly when recorded in the e-portfolio. Feedback is effective with appropriate targets set for future achievement. Most training coordinators manage reviews well and motivate learners, giving clear guidance on how to progress. However, a small minority of reviews do not sufficiently involve employers to support learning or improve progress.
- Most learners receive good support and one-to-one coaching in English, mathematics and functional skills. Many training coordinators deliver high-quality functional skills training through vocational coaching. For example, in hospitality and catering, tutors use recipes to develop learners' understanding of ratios and fractions.
- A small minority of learners are not taking functional skills assessments sufficiently early in their programmes and this slows their progress towards completion of their qualification. A small minority of learners, who would benefit from extension work, do not develop English, mathematics and functional skills as much as they could.
- Highly effective and timely information, advice and guidance support learning well. Through well-crafted aptitude and skills analysis, advisers place learners on suitable programmes that match their aspirations and job roles. Learners receive good information about programmes and their progress, as well as helpful advice on progression and employment opportunities. For example, learners received good advice on choosing the direction of their career in hospitality.
- The promotion of fairness, equality of opportunity and tolerance of difference across society in taught sessions and progress reviews is good. For example, retail learners, during a session on security, described how they would help a customer with limited mobility. Learners have a sound awareness of other cultures and of the value of treating others with mutual respect. Training coordinators explore skilfully with learners how these values apply to their personal and working lives. Training coordinators use their knowledge and skills well to take into account learners' personal circumstances.

## Hospitality and catering

### Apprenticeships

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, as reflected in the high proportion of students who successfully complete their courses. The large number of learners completing programmes in good time has increased significantly. Although success rates for a few learners in hospitality and catering have declined, they remain well above national rates.
- Learners' progression onto higher-level courses or promotion is good. A majority of learners progress from intermediate to advanced-level programmes. Unique Training provides a wide range of learning programmes that are relevant to learner needs and to the local and regional priorities in the hospitality and catering sector. This enables learners to choose career pathways, and to progress to higher levels of study and employment.
- Training coordinators plan hospitality and catering sessions very well. They present clear and appropriate learning and development objectives, and have challenging expectations so that learners can improve their skills and knowledge rapidly. In frequent professional discussions,

training coordinators inspire learners to enhance their learning and understanding through interesting and relevant scenarios. This means that learners are able to apply well what they have learned at work to other contexts.

- Training coordinators have a good rapport with their learners, and with employers. Consequently, learners strive hard to demonstrate what they have learned. They benefit from reliable and informative feedback from their training coordinators. This helps learners to develop greater confidence in their work, and to become independent learners who are able to think quickly and resolve problems at work, such as covering for staff absences.
- In challenging sessions, training coordinators use effective questioning to assess knowledge, skills and competence. They identify accurately how much progress learners have made and whether or not the learners are ready to move onto the next stage of training. In the less effective sessions, training coordinators' use of directed questioning is insufficiently skilful, answering questions for learners so that the assessment of knowledge and skills is not as effective as it could be.
- Learners use information and learning technology (ILT) and other well-prepared resources, at work and at home, to extend and develop their breadth and scope of learning in areas as diverse as risk assessment in busy bars, and the safe preparation and cooking of poultry and fish dishes.
- Arrangements to check that learners are studying at the right level, and that they understand the attitudes and skills required for a career in hospitality and catering, are comprehensive. Learners complete a thorough assessment of their skills to assess their starting points and to identify learning needs. Training coordinators use the results from these assessments effectively to plan for, and meet additional learning support and individual learning styles. This means that learners are able to make good progress.
- Most learners develop effective skills in English and mathematics. Training coordinators provide extensive feedback on the correct use of English and support learners to develop, for example, effective report writing skills. A small minority of learners are able to extend their English, mathematics and functional skills: for most of this minority, the challenge is not yet great enough.
- Effective training and support ensure that learners understand how to work well with a diverse range of customers and clients. Learners in hospitality and catering know how to keep themselves and others safe. They recognise fully the importance of safe working practices when dealing with food, liquids and chemicals in kitchens, bars and public places.

## Administration and business management

### Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Although success rates in administration and business management have risen since 2012/13, improved teaching, learning and assessment have not been in place over sufficient time to show a consistent improvement in success rates for all business learners. Training coordinators do not challenge and stretch the small number of learners on higher apprenticeships sufficiently well. Consequently, these learners do not achieve their qualifications in time. The majority of learners acquire appropriate workplace skills and become an asset to their employers. Young learners in particular grow in confidence with the support of Unique Training staff and their employers.
- Training coordinators use an effective range of well-planned teaching methods and resources, including IT, to successfully engage and enthuse learners. For example, learners were effectively engaged in the topic of customer complaints by the trainer's use of humorous videos. They learned quickly and were able to identify how to improve their customer service at work. Training coordinators use good questioning skills to allow learners to participate well and make good progress in these sessions.



- Learners make good use of the internet resources that staff make available. They develop valuable independent study and research skills that improve their work both at home and in their workplaces.
- Employers receive good feedback from training coordinators about learners' training needs and progress. However, training coordinators do not invite sufficient employer involvement in learning throughout learners' programmes, especially progress reviews.
- Assessment practices by staff meet requirements of the qualifications well. Training coordinators successfully encourage learners to present a diverse range of work for assessment, so that learners are able to demonstrate clearly what they know and are able to do.
- Training coordinators and learners share a very clear understanding of progress, aided significantly by the introduction of electronic methods of submitting work for all new learners this year. These learners benefit from the detailed feedback about their progress and know what they need to do to complete the next stages of their learning. On the other hand, the large minority of learners using paper-based portfolios do not get the same kind of instant feedback about their progress. As a result, these learners do not always make the progress they should, and a small minority do not then complete their learning within planned timescales.
- Assessors use the results from assessments of learners' starting points for English, mathematics and functional skills effectively to identify learners' needs in preparing for final tests. Training coordinators provide well-targeted coaching to address learners' skills gaps for example, to improve knowledge of spreadsheet functions in a finance business. Learners continue their learning with independent use of IT, workbooks and sample tests. Staff mark written work carefully and explain corrections and improvements to learners in considerable detail, so that they can improve their work in their own time.
- Apprentices receive good information and guidance when they begin their studies so that they have a clear understanding of their suitability for, and how their programme prepares them for work in administration and business management. A large minority of learners receive good advice about progression to higher or alternative qualifications offered by Unique Training and other providers. However, learners' reviews contain few references to longer-term options and aspirations.
- Learners develop an adequate understanding of their role as active citizens in modern Britain, which training coordinators check and reinforce regularly during reviews. Training coordinators refer to diversity topics in most sessions and engage learners in discussions. One such discussion involved exploring how disabled people would access learners' services and another covered the cultural aspects of body language. Learners show basic awareness of personal and internet safety and of the sort of behaviours they should report.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

### **Requires improvement**

- Following changes to the management team, senior managers have been slow to implement fully improvements to resolve the action points highlighted from the previous inspection. The restructured management team recently revised its strategic and operational procedures. However, these plans are recent and their impact on quality assurance arrangements is not yet evident.
- Leaders and managers have clear strategic priorities to improve skills and develop sustainable employment for their learners and these priorities link well with those of the 'North East Strategic Economic Plan'. Staff work well with key external organisations to support learners to secure an apprenticeship with Unique Training and meet these priorities.
- Senior managers have extended the range of qualifications offered to apprentices so that the curriculum meets well the requirements of both learners and employers. Additionally, managers have ensured that Unique Training provides higher-level apprenticeships to suitable candidates to allow progression into management in the hospitality and catering and business sectors, which links closely with the regional economic plan.

- Managers have paid insufficient attention to the development of English and mathematics for the more able and the timing of functional skills assessments. Managers recognise the need to restructure apprenticeship timetables so that learners are able to complete their functional skills qualifications at an earlier stage. They have recently appointed specialist teachers and current learners are beginning to benefit from better teaching and support than in the past.
- The process of self-assessment requires improvement. The self-assessment report does not clearly identify all of the key strengths and areas for development. There is insufficient analysis of achievement and other data to inform self-assessment. As a result, managers do not devise appropriate action plans or targets for improvement. Targets are insufficiently robust, resulting in managers not having a full understanding of the progress made. This leads to late fulfilment of targets, which has a negative impact on the improvement of learning and on skills development for a minority of learners.
- Performance management requires improvement. Although outcomes are good or better for the large majority of the apprenticeship programmes, the outcomes of individual teaching, learning and assessment observations do not routinely inform performance and action plans for improvement for tutors. Senior managers acknowledge this as an area for development and have plans to improve this critical element of their work.
- Staff are well qualified and have good relevant industrial experience that they put to good use to engage and enthuse learners. Tutors benefit from a range of professional development opportunities including gaining teaching qualifications and introductory courses on how to coach learners with autism. Previous managers focused closely on quality assurance and this is why teaching, learning and assessment are now good. However, current quality assurance arrangements, under the new management team, are insufficiently robust to effect further improvements or to hold staff to account for performance.
- Staff respect and acknowledge learners' individuality and give learners the best possible support to achieve well. Staff promote the diversity of modern Britain well and ensure that learners know about the Equality Act 2010. Learners understand how to apply these principles at work and in their personal lives. However, development plans fail to identify what improvements managers could make to further promote and monitor the recruitment of learners that are representative of the society in which they live and work.
- The safeguarding of all learners requires improvement. Not all staff have received training on safeguarding at an appropriate level. Managers have planned training to rectify this. The provider has clear policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The single central register is up to date and contains all appropriate information. Managers have made adequate provision to train their training coordinators in the coming months to contribute to the government's counter-radicalisation and counter-extremism strategy. Managers pay good attention to health and safety so that learners understand the importance of this in the workplace.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)****Unique Training (North East) Limited**

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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Hospitality and catering</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Business management</b>	<b>3</b>



<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider								
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+								
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	229								
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Barry Evans								
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	July 2013								
<b>Website address</b>	www.uniquetraining-ne.co.uk								
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>									
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>		
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
	N/A	2	N/A	14	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	
<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+		
	21	58	4	73	2		25		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>									
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A								
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A								
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A								
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A								
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lifeskills Central</li> <li>■ PSB Training Limited</li> </ul>								

## Contextual information

Unique Training (North East) Limited was established in August 2011, with Lifeskills Central and PSB Training Limited (PSB) as its only constituents, to offer apprenticeships and training in the north east of England. The two organisations are subcontractors to Unique Training and jointly employ 20 staff of whom 14 are tutors and assessors. One of the two directors left the organisation partway through 2014. A restructured, and larger, management team comprising staff from Lifeskills Central and PSB Training Limited is now in place.

Unique Training provides apprenticeships and training in hospitality and catering, retailing and wholesaling, administration, and business management. Unemployment rates in the north east of England are significantly higher than the national averages. A lower proportion of school leavers in the north east achieve GCSEs at grades A\* to C in English and mathematics than the national average.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Christopher Jones HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and 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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