

Skills for Health Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		20–24 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

Skills for Health is good because:

- The majority of learners achieve their qualifications and rates of progress have much improved.
- The standard of learners' work is good and learners demonstrate good vocational skills including personal, social and employability skills; learners become confident communicators and adopt a professional manner at work.
- Progression rates to higher level qualifications and into job roles of increased responsibility are good.
- Excellent support from assessors and mentors develops learners' skills and practices in the workplace, and highly qualified staff from relevant professional settings encourage learners to develop their own learning.
- Very good functional skills training gives many learners the opportunity to develop their English and mathematics beyond the level of their programme.
- Learners develop a good understanding of equality and diversity through the sharing of relevant and realistic examples from their work settings.
- Performance and contract management by leaders and managers is strong, and they set clear expectations to ensure that learners make the progress they should.
- The training programmes meet national and local priorities well by qualifying the workforce in the health and care sector.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- A small minority of learners continue to make slow progress, particularly business administration learners, and a minority of subcontractors do not make full use of Skills for Health processes to identify at an early enough stage those learners not making adequate progress.
- A few assessors do not always take full account of learners' existing skills when planning assessments, so some learners do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Staff do not routinely identify specific learning or language needs. When learners do receive support, it is often not from specialist staff.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of learners' progress further, particularly for business administration learners, to ensure learners complete their qualifications on time and enhance their career prospects.
- Ensure that staff swiftly identify learners' specific learning and additional needs and that appropriate specialist support is put into place.
- Ensure that more learners are able to develop their skills in English, mathematics and functional skills beyond the minimum level required by their main qualification.
- Address inconsistencies between subcontractors by further developing the sharing of good practice, particularly to ensure that:
 - individual needs are taken into account in planning teaching sessions
 - learners' existing skills are considered when assessments are planned
 - all learners who do not make the required progress are quickly identified and supported to ensure they complete within the planned timescale.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. Skills for Health mainly provides health and care qualifications to large NHS Trusts and draws learners from all age groups across the country. At the time of the inspection the vast majority of learners were aged over 19, undertaking health-related qualifications, with a small minority of learners completing business administration qualifications. A few learners are completing childcare, information technology, and management qualifications. Of all learners, the large majority are apprentices with a small minority completing work-based and classroom-based learning programmes. Qualifications are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and a few learners are completing higher apprenticeships at degree level.
- Overall success rates for all qualifications have improved since the previous inspection and are now above the national rates for all providers. More recently, learners have increased their rate of progress, although a minority still makes slow progress. For the few younger, work-based learners and apprentices, success rates are above the national rates for all providers, but progress is slow for the apprentices: in 2013/14 fewer than half completed on time.
- The largest area of identified disability for learners is dyslexia and these learners are very successful, with all completing in 2013/14, the vast majority on time. In classroom-based learning, dyslexic learners are particularly successful, as are others with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The system to monitor the attendance and progress of learners across all aspects of the training programme is working well and the number of learners who are classed as 'over stays' has been significantly reduced.
- Learners' work is of a good standard. Employers report that their learners make good progress and gain good vocational skills. Current learners are very pleased with the good progress they are making. Learners are articulate and confident speakers who are able to express ideas and experiences of their work particularly well. One learner demonstrated very high-level skills and had a very good understanding of working and living in modern Britain and how to create a socially inclusive environment for children. She demonstrated this particularly well in her accounts of practice.
- The development of personal, social and employability skills is particularly good. Over three quarters of learners recently surveyed said they had gained in confidence and are more able to

do their jobs. Almost all gained new knowledge and skills to help them in their job roles. The majority say that they can now deliver better services to clients. More than half expect to take on more responsibility at work, and just over a quarter of learners had had an increase in their pay. The behaviour of learners is very positive, particularly young learners who show maturity and respect as demonstrated during a sensitive session on safeguarding.

- Challenging targets are set to help learners gain confidence and improve their social skills. Employers confirm that attending the apprenticeship programme has had a positive impact on the care of service users, particularly in linking theory to good practice and developing communication skills. Learners see themselves as the patients' advocates and recognise they are making a significant difference to the patients' quality of life. An experienced and already well-qualified learner taking a higher-level apprenticeship reported particularly good communication with her assessor, and good peer support and professional discussion through the workshops provided.
- Just over a third of leavers in 2013/14 progressed from intermediate- to advanced-level courses; learners gain supervisory roles and become, for example, team leaders and field supervisors.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The quality of learners' experience in all areas of health and social care is now more consistently good across subcontractors, resulting in significantly improved success rates. It is particularly good for the small number of learners on the early years programme. However, for the small proportion of learners in business and administration, many of whom make slow progress, teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Trainers and assessors expect high standards from learners that reflect the professional behaviours and values of the commercial and public sectors they work in. Learners develop a good understanding of equality and diversity through the sharing of relevant and realistic examples from their work settings. For example, learners discussed how Sikh surgeons wore protective caps over their turbans in theatre and how the rule for 'bare below the elbow on wards' meant that disposable sleeves are provided for staff who, for cultural reasons, are unable to expose this part of their body.
- Learners highly value the support they receive from assessors and mentors to develop their skills and practices in the workplace, for example in arranging different work experiences and aligning these to career goals.
- Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored and employers are informed of learners with poor attendance.
- The majority of teaching and assessing are good or better, but there are still some weaker areas between and within subcontractors and subject areas, for example in business administration. In weaker sessions too little account is taken of individual learners' needs and targeted questioning is not consistently or effectively deployed.
- Learners benefit from being trained by highly qualified staff from relevant professional settings. They are encouraged to develop their learning beyond the sessions provided by staff. Skills for Health demands high minimum levels of qualifications for assessors and trainers, including those responsible for English and mathematics.
- Initial assessment is thorough and comprehensive to ensure that learners are placed on the most appropriate level of programme. However, target setting is weak on a few courses. Some targets set for learners are not specific enough. Learners are often set short- and long-term targets but fewer medium-term ones against which to measure their progress. Targets tend to be unit focused in an attempt to help learners complete in the time allocated, with only a few examples of targets for personal and skill development.
- The identification of specific learning or language needs is not routine. When learners do receive support, specialist staff rarely provide it and it is limited to coping strategies rather than

overcoming barriers. For example, learners for whom English is not their first language do not receive support from language specialists to develop academic writing styles.

- Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods that successfully engage and motivate learners. A few assessors do not always take full account of learners’ existing skills when planning assessments, so some learners do not make the progress they are capable of. Some learners have extensive experience of health-related work before starting the programme and little account is taken of this. Learners value the mostly detailed feedback on their assessments that helps them to improve their work. Not all learners receive this as formally recorded written feedback for future reference.
- Reviews of progress now ensure that most learners and their employers are clear about what they have achieved and need to do further. In some cases, recorded feedback from employers lacks detail and does not always help in identifying how the employer can support further skills development. In some learner progress reviews there is too little exploration of social and cultural differences in society and related equality themes.
- Subcontractors increasingly use improved systems to highlight any learners at risk of not completing in the set time frame. However, not all subcontractors identify such learners at an early enough point, resulting in late completion.
- The teaching of functional skills is generally very good, and well integrated within vocational subject sessions; many learners have the opportunity to develop their English and mathematics beyond the level of their programme. Learners on dental apprenticeships, exempt from studying mathematics or English, have the opportunity to further develop and practise them as they occur naturally as part of their programme. In one subcontractor’s exemplary sessions, delivered from the start of the programme, using a wide variety of resources ensures that learners quickly gain these essential qualifications and then further extend their skills. This is not the experience for all learners.
- Trainers’ and assessors’ correction of learners’ spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes in written work is not routine nor wholly reliable. Indeed, the standard of a few assessors’ own English and mathematics requires improvement in order for assessors to be able to support their learners more effectively.
- Thorough and impartial information, advice and guidance from a range of services, including a comprehensive interview, screening and initial assessment process, ensure that learners are well equipped for their programme. Many subcontractors offer clear career pathways, but a small minority of health-related learners do not receive sufficient guidance to inform them fully about future career options and the requirements to reach their goals.

Health and social care	
Apprenticeships	Good
19+ Learning programmes	

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, which ensures outcomes for the majority of learners are also good, with significantly improved success rates for all courses in 2013/14 and high achievement rates for advanced-level apprentices and learners on classroom-based courses. Staff have high expectations for all learners and plan thoroughly to ensure their success. Learners are very well prepared for their roles in the health and social care sectors.
- A large majority of current learners are making good progress. Assessors visit apprentices frequently and use a good variety of effective assessment and learning activities to motivate and engage all learners. This ensures that learners develop a good understanding of the skills and values needed to provide good standards of care and health practices in the workplace. For example, learners who work in medical settings understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding vulnerable people and support them well during clinical appointments. Staff make sure learners have a good understanding of diversity in their workplaces and help them to show

a keen interest in understanding people's differences and greater awareness of other cultures. Assessors pay good attention to ensuring learners learn and work in safe and inclusive environments.

- Most staff have good vocational knowledge and experience which they use effectively to help apprentices to understand some of the day-to-day challenges faced in health and social care settings, for example promoting independence, understanding cultural differences, successfully engaging people living with dementia and respecting confidentiality. Staff monitor and assess learners' progress thoroughly and respond quickly with further support when concerns arise. Initial assessment is thorough and used effectively to set individual targets which make sure apprentices make good progress.
- Most staff make good use of technology to illustrate key learning points, ensure communication with learners and employers is good, and record progress in learning. The majority of staff provide learners with good information and advice at all stages of their course to help them consider options and make important decisions about further training and careers. However, a few learners are unclear about the career and future learning options available because staff do not explain them thoroughly.
- Almost all staff ensure learners understand how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve their work. Progress is illustrated very well using technology which is accessible to learners and employers. Staff ask learners to explore and reflect on equality and social inclusion, such as discussing the significance of poor health and how it relates to low income and reduced quality of life. Assessors work effectively with employers to plan learning in the workplace and review the progress made by learners. Assessment of learners' work is accurate, frequent and fair.
- The majority of staff make sure learners improve their English and mathematics during planned tasks and activities. They correct spelling, punctuation and grammar thoroughly as they mark written work, and individual support for apprentices to improve their skills is readily available and very effective. However, a few assessors do not provide learners with clear enough feedback to ensure they improve their skills. A minority of learners in the south of England, including those who speak English as a second language, do not receive the support they need soon enough in their programme.

Administration

Apprenticeships

19+ Learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is reflected in success rates which, although improved over the past year, remain below average. Too many learners make slow progress. Learners develop good work-related skills and become more confident in their job roles. The standard of learners' work is high and learners compile a good range of evidence in their portfolios. Administration learners work well in culturally diverse teams in large National Health Service Trusts, valuing and respecting each other. Many of the units of the administration apprenticeship cover aspects of equality and diversity and safe working practices, and learners are able to apply their learning effectively in the workplace.
- In the less successful sessions, tutors do not plan sufficiently to meet learners' individual needs and a minority of learners lose interest. The pace of learning is too slow. Tutors make insufficient use of targeted questions that might challenge learners and extend their learning. In a small minority of cases, tutors' expectations of learners are not high enough.
- In the better sessions, tutors plan learning activities skilfully to help learners to develop a wide range of good work-related skills. Learners apply these new skills in the workplace very well. For example, one business administration learner has introduced a clinical board on the ward to help patients understand their appointment times and to notify them of any delays. Tutors use a

range of interactive activities well which encourages learners to work both independently and collaboratively, developing skills to enable apprentices to progress in their careers and to further their learning. Tutors make good use of resources to support learners' development. Where learners do not attend formal classroom sessions, assessors direct them to useful websites, or provide them with effective one-to-one coaching in the workplace to help them to make better progress.

- While initial assessment is thorough, the results are not used effectively enough to plan individual learning. Short-, medium- and long-term targets are too vague and they do not drive the progress of learners or help them to achieve more quickly. Targets do not always include learners' personal and work-related skills development and learning support needs, and learners are not always clear about the progress they are making.
- Assessors are well qualified and have relevant experience of working within the National Health Service. They have a good understanding of learners' job roles which they use effectively to benefit learners when planning assessment activities and developing their skills. For example, one business administration learner, working as a project officer, uses newly acquired project management skills effectively, producing good quality risk reports to present to the project board.
- Progress reviews focus clearly on learners' progress towards the completion of their qualification and learners develop good personal, learning and thinking skills. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their learning and to identify the new skills that they have developed. Assessors provide helpful oral feedback which supports learners to complete administrative tasks effectively in the workplace. However, written feedback is not sufficiently developmental to challenge learners to reflect on their progress and to make improvements.
- The teaching of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology for functional skills is good. Tutors develop these skills effectively for apprentices during classroom sessions and learners become more confident when using mathematics and completing basic calculations. Learners who need additional help with mathematics receive further support from their assessors and this helps them to make better progress. However, the marking of learners' written work is insufficient to help learners improve their skills further.
- Advice, guidance and support are good. Assessors actively encourage learners to complete further qualifications related to their career development and organisational needs. Learners gain promotion to more senior positions as a result of completing their programme. Learners' progression to higher-level qualifications is high.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for the organisation and have responded well to the challenges posed by the last inspection. Strategic changes to reporting structures enable leaders and managers to set, monitor and evaluate challenging targets for improvement. They share these targets effectively with trainers, assessors, subcontractors and managers. Through strong performance and contract management, leaders and managers communicate their high expectations to ensure that most current learners make the progress they should.
- The transformation of the management structure has established a secure platform for further improvement. Rigorous self-assessment, which draws effectively on evidence and views from learners, employers and subcontractors, identifies strengths and areas for improvement to continue to reduce the variations in achievement evident between some regions and subcontractors.
- Board members provide appropriate challenge and hold managers and subcontractors to account for raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and improving learner outcomes. Through rigorous data analysis and reports from managers and the governance and audit subcommittee, board members and senior managers scrutinise clear and appropriate data summaries and now challenge subcontractors where learners make slow progress.

- Frequent and regular quality monitoring visits to subcontractors and observations of teaching, learning and assessment enable managers to intervene directly so that assessors and subcontractors get learners back on course to succeed. They do this through well-crafted staff development programmes to improve assessment and training. Managers encourage and support partners to share best practice so that learners, regardless of their location, benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Skills for Health leaders and managers use local and regional employment data and their strong links with employers so that learners and employers can access suitable training and development. Accordingly, learners benefit from flexible programmes that fit well with their job roles and career aspirations. For example, managers work closely with employers to plan and deliver specialist clinical and mental healthcare qualifications more suited to their requirements.
- Managers have refined initial assessment practice and increased the focus on improving learners' English, mathematics and functional skills. Consequently, learners study English and mathematics at an appropriate level and make good progress. Although most learners have opportunities to extend their learning, managers recognise the need for more learners to develop their skills beyond the minimum level required by their main qualification.
- Through well-planned programmes, managers enable learners who wish to do so to begin higher levels of study. Learners and employers rate the training highly. As a result, many learners gain promotion, take on additional responsibilities or gain permanent contracts when they have completed their qualifications.
- Leaders and managers are clearly aware of their responsibility for learners to understand and reflect the society in which they live and work. Well-trained and qualified staff promote the diversity of modern Britain well and make sure that learners know, for example, about the Equality Act 2010 and the role of the Care Quality Commission.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Skills for Health meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and learners feel safe. Good, clear policies and procedures including e-safety are shared throughout the organisation. Safe recruitment practices are appropriate. Good reporting arrangements, with careful analysis of data and incidents, identify trends and geographical, subcontracting or placement concerns and anomalies. Very effective whistleblowing support enables learners to gain confidence in identifying poor practice on placement and at work. Whilst aware of potential radicalisation issues, the board has yet to cover this topic. Regional training ensures roles and responsibilities are understood, dovetailing with local arrangements. Staff and learners know how to report incidents or concerns and managers provide appropriate counselling and support when necessary, for example in supporting young women forced into marriage.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

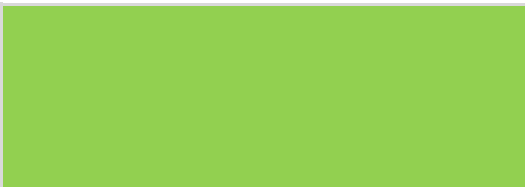
Skills for Health Ltd

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	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
Outcomes for learners	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Administration	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1459							
Principal/CEO	John Rogers							
Date of previous inspection	April 2013							
Website address	www.skillsforhealth.org.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+
	-	8	-	5	-	95	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	10	272	42	395	-	35		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	8							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Dimension Ltd ■ Aytun Vocational College ■ Beacon Education Partnership Ltd ■ Central Manchester University Hospitals ■ Mersey Care ■ Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen Hospital ■ London TCCS ■ South Manchester Hospital ■ Greater Manchester West Mental Health ■ Salford Royal ■ Pennine Acute Trust ■ Liverpool Community Health ■ Southampton Hospital 							

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- North East Hub
 - Stella Maris Training Ltd
 - CITE
 - St Thomas More

Contextual information

Skills for Health Limited is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector and a registered charity which helps health and care employers develop their workforce. It is part of the Skills for Health group of companies and holds a Skills Funding Agency direct contract and subcontracts to a large number of specialist partners. It is a national provider operating from regional offices in London, Liverpool, and Manchester. In Newcastle upon Tyne, Skills for Health delivers a range of training programmes directly to employers and learners. The organisation's head office is based in Bristol.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Rosy Belton HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Programmes 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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