

LIGA (UK) Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		11–13 February 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- too many apprentices leave their course early and do not achieve
- male apprentices do not achieve as well as female apprentices
- progress for a minority of apprentices is slow because they do not complete sufficient assessments in the early stages of the programme
- the ambitious targets set by leaders and managers have not been fully realised
- the promotion of equality and diversity is ineffective in raising apprentices' awareness of diversity in the workplace
- safeguarding arrangements lack sufficient reference to employment and employers.

This provider has the following strengths:

- apprentices develop good vocational and employability skills, and most of those who complete their programme progress into full-time employment
- self-assessment is good; leaders and managers have identified weaknesses and have acted decisively to put in place strategies to improve teaching and learning
- LIGA responds well to national priorities by working with apprentices who are predominantly aged 16 to 18
- LIGA has constructive links with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and engages with strategic partners in initiatives to meet local skills needs.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of apprentices who stay on programme and complete the full framework successfully, particularly male apprentices at intermediate level, by closely monitoring their progress and ensuring they receive sufficient training and support.
- Plan training carefully to ensure apprentices are able to complete assessments earlier; increase employers' involvement in this planning to enhance the progress apprentices make in the early stages of their programme so they stay motivated to complete on time.
- Leaders and managers must promote equality and diversity and clearly specify measurable actions to enhance apprentices' knowledge and understanding, to widen participation and achieve parity of achievement between different groups of learners.
- Strengthen safeguarding arrangements by specifying expectations and duties more clearly and by taking into consideration employers' responsibilities.
- Ensure high standards by rigorously monitoring performance and sustaining the recent improvements to the quality of provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LIGA's government funded training supports apprenticeships, mostly on business administration programmes with a very small number on retail and commercial enterprise programmes. Most apprentices are between 16 and 18 years of age when they commence training. ▪ The number of apprentices who successfully complete their programme requires improvement. Too many learners left their apprenticeships before the planned completion date in 2013/14, the first year of LIGA's operation. The success rate for the small group of retail and commercial enterprise apprentices was particularly low. LIGA is not enrolling any more apprentices onto this programme. ▪ In 2013/14, the success rate for intermediate administration apprentices, who are the biggest group, was low. All advanced administration apprentices, who make up just under a third of the administration apprentices, qualified on time. ▪ Fewer male apprentices are successful in qualifying compared to their female peers, and the success rate for male apprentices, who make up a minority of learners, requires improvement. ▪ Apprentices who qualify gain good vocational skills and develop the confidence to use them in the workplace. For example, they develop employability skills well; they learn how to behave when working alongside colleagues and with supervisors; they come to appreciate the need for good time keeping and other work disciplines. Apprentices work in busy reception areas dealing with the public confidently, demonstrating good customer service skills and using modern office technology competently. Apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills well. ▪ Most apprentices who qualify take up full-time employment with their employer and a small number gain promotion to positions of responsibility. A small minority of learners progress from the intermediate to the advanced apprenticeship and similar numbers progress to higher-level qualifications supported by their employer. 	
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which reflects the low numbers of apprentices who qualify. Leaders and managers recognise that too many apprentices leave early and have put strategies in place to improve the quality and frequency of support for apprentices in teaching, learning and assessment. It is too early to see the full impact of these strategies on retention and outcomes, although the apprentices who stay in training now benefit from better 	

and more reliable support from assessors and employers. Most work in busy environments that allow them to develop good communication skills, appropriate behaviours and work disciplines.

- Assessors are qualified in their subject area and bring this expertise to teaching sessions, helping apprentices to develop their understanding of theory in a real work environment. For example, apprentices learn about the principles of marketing in the context of a service environment. All assessors are qualified to train apprentices or are working towards suitable teaching/training qualifications. In good sessions, assessors extend apprentices' learning and promote independent learning well. For example, worksheets contain hyperlinks to further information and assessments support apprentices' learning. However, not all apprentices take up these opportunities and a few choose not to follow advice or complete the extension activities set for them.
- Assessors' planning of learning requires improvement. Sessions based on a generic scheme of work do not identify or link to the apprentices' initial starting points well enough. Planning to meet individual needs is underdeveloped. In a small number of weaker sessions, poor planning and insufficient time spent by assessors in the workplace affects the quality of reviews and teaching, learning and assessment. In a minority of cases, learners do not make sufficient progress in the early stages of their programmes.
- Employers are not routinely involved in planning, training or in contributing to assessment to enhance their learners' progress and further develop their skills, particularly at the start of the programme. For example, assessors do not always use real-work examples relating to the need for health and safety in the workplace to develop apprentices' understanding.
- Feedback on apprentices' written assignments is not always developmental and does not tell learners what they need to do to extend their knowledge and how to apply this knowledge to challenging work situations. Apprentices are successfully encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by self-assessing their progress in sessions, for example reflecting on the development of personal learning and thinking skills.
- Apprentices receive good support to develop their written and spoken English skills, including those who are exempt from taking functional skills qualifications. All apprentices have their English skills assessed at the start of the programme through a diagnostic process and receive frequent support that includes self-assessing, correcting and redrafting written work. All apprentices have their mathematics skills assessed, but staff do not do enough to develop these further through naturally occurring work tasks or by providing specific coaching sessions in the workplace.
- Initial assessment, advice and guidance are good. At enrolment, LIGA staff meet each new apprentice and their employer to discuss a training programme that suits them both, and to carry out a skills scan. Apprentices receive good practical advice and guidance that help those that who stay in training to qualify and move into full-time employment or further training.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. In the best coaching sessions, apprentices learn well, benefiting from the skilful use of good learning resources, for example video clips and illustrations of workplace practices to illustrate learning points about how to treat people with different needs. In other sessions, learning is ineffective when equality topics do not relate to the workplace or the apprentices' experience. Reviews do not probe sufficiently learners' understandings of equalities matters, and a majority of learners have only a basic understanding of equality and diversity. While a small number of learners have a good understanding of cyber safety, others do not. Learners feel safe and apply other health and safety requirements in the workplace well.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have high expectations for learners and set challenging targets to become a high performing provider. After one full year of operation, performance is below the targets set, and too many learners leave without completing their apprenticeship framework.

- Leaders and managers now recognise the areas that need improvement and are working to put actions in place, taking decisive action to address weaknesses in the provision following self-assessment in the autumn of 2014. These actions include restructuring the organisation; removing from the programmes offered those that did not perform well; redesigning training programmes, particularly by introducing functional skills earlier; establishing a more stable workforce of full-time employees and starting to improve arrangements for the governance of the provision.
- Communication with employers was not good enough in the previous year. The provision covers a wide geographical area, from the south coast to the north of England, with mainly single apprentices training with employers in small businesses. Ineffective communication with all employers and apprentices underpinned many of the problems of the past year.
- LIGA's engagement with employers has improved partly because of the more stable workforce of full-time assessors, but additional improvements are required and leaders and managers recognise this. They are now expecting assessors to work more closely with employers and have set targets for them to build a stronger partnership with employers to ensure apprentices' training improves in the workplace.
- Improvement is beginning to take place and fewer learners are leaving early. A thorough process operates now to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This has allowed managers to identify accurately specific areas for improvement, such as developing better learning resources for apprentices to use in individual learning sessions in the workplace. Staff development and support arrangements are good. A sound strategy is underway to improve and increase the use of learning technology. However, it is too early to see the impact of all improvements.
- Recently introduced performance management arrangements are good. The process sets high standards for staff, with some early indications of impact in improving the retention of current learners, improving the quality of teaching and learning and increasing the rigour staff apply to learners' reviews. Leaders and managers review staff performance systematically through frequent individual reviews that measure performance against the specific and measurable standards set. The new process requires sustained application over time before it will be possible to judge the impact it has on overall performance.
- Self-assessment and evaluation of the provision are good, with suitable quality improvement arrangements now in operation. This was not the case in 2013/14. The systematic collection of users' views now supports actions for improvement, although the response rate from employers is low and requires improvement. The current self-assessment report uses data well to support most judgements and is generally accurate.
- Leaders ensure provision meets national priorities by concentrating on recruiting apprentices who are predominantly aged 16 to 18. Managers now meet the needs of employers well; they focus carefully on working with small and micro businesses that require new office staff, for example administration in medical practices and other National Health Service establishments.
- Managers are actively developing relationships with the Local Enterprise Partnership and other bodies with a view to introducing new training provision to address skill shortages in logistics, science and engineering. This is at a very early stage but demonstrates leaders' aspiration to play a part in meeting the skills shortages in Oxfordshire.
- Promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Although leaders and managers are working to close achievement gaps and taking other actions to widen participation and promote equality, the approach to this is at a very early stage. For example, the current action plan for improving the promotion of equality and diversity lacks measurable starting points and impact measures.
- Safeguarding arrangements require improvement. The safeguarding policy and the procedures that support it do not include any reference to employers or the workplaces in which apprentices operate. The eight-weekly review does not result in a record that clearly states learners are safe, although discussion about personal safety does take place. A designated senior manager oversees safeguarding, and she and the chief executive officer are qualified appropriately

through training with the local safeguarding board. A suitable process is in place for dealing with safeguarding referrals. All staff in scope have completed the correct safeguarding checks.

- Learners feel safe and staff pay sufficient attention to safeguarding, including discussing it with apprentices and their employers. Staff check that employers adhere to their responsibilities for safeguarding as outlined in their apprenticeship agreement with LIGA. Most staff have completed recent training to update their understanding of general safeguarding matters. However, more is required on specific topics such as cyber bullying, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Managers have a good understanding of these requirements and have plans in place for further staff training and raising of awareness.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

LIGA (UK) 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	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Administration	3

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	114								
Principal/CEO	Mr Sam Black								
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected								
Website address	www.ligauk.com								
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+	
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	-		-		-				
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	68	8	26	14	0	0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	-								
Full-time	-								
Part-time	-								
Number of community learners	-								
Number of employability learners	-								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<div> <div></div> <div>N/A</div> </div>								

Contextual information

LIGA (UK) Limited is a private limited company based in Witney, Oxfordshire. It is owned by two directors, one of whom is the chief executive officer. The company operates across England, recruiting and placing apprentices who are predominantly aged 16 to 18 with small and micro businesses. The company specialises in administration, customer service and marketing training; approximately 95% of its turnover is from government funding. The company formed in 2011 and operated as a subcontractor for other providers of further education and skills including two colleges of further education.

In 2013, LIGA secured a direct SFA contract. Altogether, LIGA currently works with just over 300 apprentices, including work as a subcontractor for three larger organisations. LIGA directly employs a team of assessors whose caseload includes both apprentices funded directly and apprentices funded through their subcontracted provision. Assessors live and work in different parts of the country near their apprentices' workplaces. A centre in Witney contains training facilities and accommodates a small management and support team.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Derrick Spragg HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the chief executive officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the past eighteen months to help them make judgements. Inspectors used 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 area 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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