

The Consultancy Home Counties Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		5–7 May 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:

- not enough learners achieve their qualification aims, especially in English and mathematics
- assessment of learning is not sufficiently detailed to help learners understand what they need to do to improve their next piece of work
- tutors do not set targets that are specific enough to enable learners to know exactly what they have to do and by when
- assessment of learners' personal, social and employability skills and diagnosis of English and mathematics skills are not detailed enough to enable tutors to track learners' progress against their starting points
- records of observations of teaching and learning are not sufficiently focused on learning and the progress learners make in lessons
- managers do not analyse data sufficiently to enable all staff to identify trends so that they can take prompt action to improve provision.

This provider has the following strengths:

- good support to help learners with multiple barriers to learning to re-engage with education
- good information, advice and guidance that are successful in helping learners find appropriate routes to employment, education and training
- productive collaboration with local enterprise partnerships and local authorities to design provision that meets the skills gaps and employment potential in their local areas.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Engage learners in developing their mathematics and English skills early in the programme by devising relevant and interesting activities, so they have enough time to develop sufficient skills for their future training and employment aspirations.
- Train all staff in how to assess social, personal and employability skills, and record these thoroughly, so that learners recognise easily the progress they make and tutors can challenge them frequently to progress further.
- Set precise short and long-term targets for learners so that they know exactly what they have to do to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Introduce early assessment of English and mathematical skills and share the results so that all staff have clear and detailed understanding of learners' starting points in order to plan learning that matches their individual learning needs
- Train observers to provide accurate feedback to teachers on how well learners are learning, making progress and being challenged in lessons, in order to develop well-focused professional development to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensure that managers analyse data carefully to identify trends promptly and share these with all staff to improve provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- The Consultancy Home Counties (TCHC) provides employability programmes for adults and mentoring for young people aged 16 to 17 who are not in education, employment or training across the East of England. European social funds provide the financial support for these programmes: these are not in scope for this inspection. The Education Funding Agency funds a one-year study programme, called GAPS, for young people not in education, employment or training to gain employability training through qualifications at level 2 in retail and customer service. This makes up about two per cent of TCHC's provision, which this inspection covered and graded.
- Outcomes for learners require improvement. In 2013/14, learners' success in staying on their programmes and achieving their qualifications in retail and customer service resembled that of learners in similar providers, but the proportion of learners who achieved qualifications in English and mathematics was very low. Learners who are currently on programmes make the progress expected of them in retail and customer service, but for most, formal teaching for English and mathematics does not start until several weeks into the programme. This results in too few learners making the progress of which they are capable in these skills.
- Progression rates to jobs, training and education were high in 2013/14. Despite the multiple barriers to engagement with education and employment that learners have, around two thirds, entered employment or further education in the areas for which they studied. Since the appointment of an employer engagement officer in February, all current learners have a planned progression route and they are applying for course-related employment, apprenticeships and further education colleges. It is too early to tell if all these plans will be realised.
- Well-qualified staff help learners to gain good personal, social and employability skills. Every learner benefits from the advice of a personal mentor and an employment engagement tutor.

All learners have had previous poor experience of education. Learners develop useful employability skills such as how to search for jobs and write job applications. Staff prepare learners well for employment. At the time of inspection, 10 learners were on work experience placements in which they were showing that they understood how to be good employees.

- Mentors build learners' confidence successfully; for example, they help them to use transport to the learning centres if they lack confidence at the beginning of the programme. Learners are well motivated to attend and concentrate in sessions by the provider offering a free breakfast, and staff use this occasion to talk informally with learners to identify specific barriers to learning on a daily basis. Most learners attend the learning centres dressed appropriately for work and are polite and respectful to each other and to staff.
- The way in which tutors record and monitor learners' progress in developing personal, social and employability skills requires improvement. Although most learners' work and attitude when on work placement and work related activities is appropriate, teachers do not record the progress they make in developing these skills. As a result, learners are not sufficiently aware of their progress and what to do to improve.
- The gap between the achievement of males and females is very narrow, and too few learners are from minority ethnic groups to establish if any of these groups show variance in success rates. However, in 2013/14 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved markedly less well than other learners. As managers have only one year of data, it is not yet possible to judge if this gap is closing in the current year
- Attendance at the Clacton-on-Sea centre is high, and at Cambridge it is equal to that of other similar providers. Although the majority of learners arrive on time, when they are late teachers do not challenge them sufficiently to prepare them for the demands of employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement as reflected in learners' outcomes. Although tutors have a very good understanding of learners' social and personal needs, and meet regularly to discuss learners' progress, they do not give sufficient attention to assessing and recording the level of skills learners bring to their course to measure all the progress they make over time. As a result, tutors do not have enough information to plan sufficiently for each learner's next steps in learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics and English require improvement. Assessment at the start of learners' programmes does not include a detailed identification of gaps in their knowledge. As a result, tutors do not have sufficient information to plan lessons to develop and extend individual learners' knowledge and skills. Most tutors do not focus sufficiently on the technical language of the workplace to reinforce its context during learning or the importance of understanding job-related vocabulary and spelling it correctly.
- Assessment practice, except that used for retail and customer service qualifications, is inconsistent and requires improvement. Tutors do not date all tasks, and pay insufficient attention to correcting spelling and grammar. Written feedback in English is not sufficiently timely to enable learners to learn from their mistakes and improve their writing. As a result, the same mistakes occur regularly. Similarly, in mathematics too few learners receive regular feedback to monitor their progress to support the use of calculations and mathematics in work.
- Tutors use and develop resources to meet the needs and interests of learners well. They make good use of information and communication technology to enliven lessons and encourage learners to research for information and share it with others. Learners benefit from understanding the value of using technology and team working in work places.

- Tutors have high expectations of learners' behaviour and they encourage and motivate them to do well. They provide good role models for learners, for example by following a business dress code and using appropriate language to demonstrate a professional approach to work. Tutors offer good personal support promptly to respond appropriately and effectively to learners' emotional and social needs.
- Tutors set interesting and relevant enrichment activities in real life contexts. For example, learners gain valuable experience of retailing and merchandising through an art project in collaboration with a community arts centre. They make products to a high standard and sell them to raise money for charity in a pop-up shop for which they create the layout and decor. They develop valuable workplace skills including planning and organising events, working with others, problem solving and working to deadlines. Through this, they gain confidence in their abilities. However, tutors do not capture and formally record this wider aspect of learning.
- Tutors prepare learners well to understand the demands and expectations of employers. For example, they use up-to-date information on recruitment showing feedback from employers across the country. This identifies the most common errors that lead employers to reject applications, so that learners understand the importance of accuracy and style when they write their own applications and curricula vitae.
- Information, advice and guidance are effective. Staff build productive partnerships with employers and through this are successful in developing an increasing number of work experience placements in the retail and customer service industries. Learners generally achieve high standards of work and through this develop confidence and self-belief. Mentors support and prepare learners well for interviews, often accompanying them to interviews to ensure they arrive on time.
- Tutors do not record specific areas of learning and development thoroughly enough in individual learning plans. Too many targets are vague and lack meaningful detail to plan for next steps in learning. Reviews do not show learners' progress towards improving their skills, attitudes, concepts and knowledge sufficiently or give details of their progress towards improving skills in mathematics and English.
- Not all tutors plan to reinforce workplace equality and understanding of diversity effectively or consider how people from diverse backgrounds might have different values and beliefs in the workplace. However, in one personal development session staff persuaded learners who could not see the point of voting to do so by understanding the values and intentions of different political parties. Learners are courteous and respectful of each other's differences.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Staff at all levels have a very clear focus on their aim of working with disengaged young people and supporting them into employment with training or further education. Leaders and managers reflect carefully on the provision and they have started to make improvements following a review of the first year of the programme. For example, they have employed qualified agency teachers to provide mathematics and English instead of relying on the development of these skills through embedding them in other learning, but it is too early to judge how this will affect learners' progress.
- Actions to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Reports on observed teaching, learning and assessment do not focus on learning sufficiently, and do not result in a clear action plan. This limits managers' ability to support staff and provide appropriate professional development to help them improve. Managers recognise this, and they have planned training for observers, but this has not taken place. Managers appraise

staff annually, but do not have sufficient information about teachers' training needs to make best use of this process.

- Quality improvement and self-assessment require improvement to be good. Managers produced the first self-assessment report for this provision this year. They identified a few of the issues found by inspectors including the need for improved rigour of reviews and observation of lessons and the positive judgements about care and support. However, they do not give enough emphasis to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to create a detailed and measurable quality improvement plan to ensure that all learners make the progress of which they are capable. They gather data, but do not routinely analyse it to identify trends about learners' progress and the performance of different groups.
- The range of provision is planned well to meet local needs in Cambridge and the Tendring district in Essex. Leaders and managers responded promptly to requests from local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to design the study programmes that meet the needs of disengaged learners, including young offenders and learners leaving pupil referral units, and to fill local skill and employment gaps.
- The range of levels at which learners can take qualifications is too narrow. Managers have not planned entry-level qualifications in English, mathematics and employability skills to help learners to gain underpinning skills and confidence before moving on to the levels to which they aspire. However, staff stretch learners who make good progress further, by moving them from the certificate in retail to the diploma. Several learners take GCSE English and mathematics, rather than functional skills qualifications and staff are supporting one learner who already has an English GCSE C grade to achieve an A grade.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement to ensure that all learners are fully aware of how to act in retail and customer service environments, where they will be interacting with a wide variety of people with a diversity of need and cultural expectation. They feel safe from bullying and harassment within the learning centres. Staff are skilled at intervening to counter prejudice and discrimination, and all receive regular training to update their understanding of the issues.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Managers ensure that they recruit staff safely, and have up to date vetting and barring information for all staff. All staff are aware of the need to guard learners against radicalisation and are about to receive the 'Prevent' training. They all complete on-line safeguarding training as well as direct training from the local authority regularly. Personal advisors are skilled in identifying safeguarding issues and supporting learners at risk and staff make all learners aware of how to contact a wide range of external organisations who can offer expert advice and support.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Consultancy Home Counties 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
Employability training	3

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	39								
Principal/CEO	Mrs Rose Lavin								
Date of previous inspection	N/A								
Website address	www.tchc.net								
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+	
	0	0	54	3	0	0	0	0	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16									
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable. 								

Contextual information

TCHC has offered employability training since 2004, often through short courses funded through the European Social Fund as well as Train to Gain provision. The GAPS programme started in 2013 and was designed in conjunction with the local authority and local employment partnership in Cambridge to provide a route to employment for young people who are not in education, training or employment. This was followed in 2014 by similar provision in the Tendring district of Essex. Cambridge has the highest number of young people not in education, employment or training in the Greater Cambridgeshire area.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Pauline Hawkesford AI

Two additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of Quality 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 last year 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:

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

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