

# System Group Limited (Trading as System Training)

<b>Inspection dates</b>		15–19 June 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

## Independent learning provider

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider requires improvement because:

- trainers and assessors make too little use of detailed information about learners' initial knowledge and skills to help learners to progress rapidly and to the best of their ability
- managers do not monitor the progress of apprentices well enough to ensure that they complete their programmes in the planned time
- assessors' written feedback to learners on their work lacks the detail needed to help them improve quickly
- trainers and assessors do not develop learners' English and mathematics skills sufficiently well through vocational training
- arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not yet sufficiently rigorous or effective
- managers do not evaluate the performance of teaching staff well enough; as a result, they are not sufficiently aware of the specific development needs of trainers and assessors.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- success rates on the employability training programme are good
- learners and apprentices gain very good practical and work-related skills on programmes that meet their own and their employers' skill development needs well
- trainers and assessors develop learners' understanding of life in a diverse society well
- the new leaders, managers and board have a clear strategy to improve the company's performance rapidly; this has led to early improvement in the quality of the provision
- leaders and managers plan well to meet national and local needs in the logistics industry
- managers monitor the quality of subcontracted provision very effectively, acting quickly to improve underperformance.

## Full report

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

- Improve the success rates of apprentices by implementing a robust monitoring system so that managers can check apprentices' rate of progress and take action where it is too slow. Ensure that assessors monitor and record the progress of apprentices closely in order to identify accurately what apprentices need to do further to make rapid progress.
- Strengthen the way that teaching staff integrate English and mathematics into all teaching, learning and assessment so that all learners improve these skills, essential to their future employability, from the beginning of their programmes, whatever their starting points. Make sure that achievement of functional skills qualifications does not delay apprentices in completing their programmes in the planned time.
- Improve initial assessment so that teaching staff identify learners' starting points accurately and that trainers use this information to set challenging targets that help learners progress to the best of their ability.
- Improve the written feedback that assessors give to apprentices about their progress so that they fully understand how to improve further, including how to improve their use of written English.
- Strengthen arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by using the outcomes of observations and feedback from learners and employers to identify and tackle weaknesses.
- Quickly implement the planned improvements to managing the performance of staff; ensure that managers closely monitor the performance of all trainers and assessors, identify areas for improvement, and provide appropriate support and training to help them to strengthen weaker aspects of their practice.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Around two thirds of System Training's government-funded provision consists of short courses to prepare unemployed adults for work and to develop specific work-related skills. Typically, learners progress through three weeks of training consisting of one week's accredited employability training and two weeks of specific vocational skills training. The vocational short courses provide accredited qualifications mainly in forklift truck operation and in warehousing and distribution. Apprenticeship programmes at intermediate and advanced levels for young people and adults make up the remaining third of the company's provision. Most apprentices are following programmes in warehousing and distribution, motor vehicle and transportation operations and maintenance.</li> <li>▪ Apprenticeship success rates require improvement. In 2012/13, the proportion of apprentices gaining qualifications declined, falling significantly below the national average at intermediate level. Although success rates improved in 2013/14, the proportion of learners gaining intermediate qualifications in the planned time remained well below that of similar providers. Following significant action by the new management team, current learners are making steady progress. The provider's own data indicate that for the current year the proportion of learners who have gained their qualifications remains below that of similar providers but is likely to improve in 2014/15.</li> </ul>	

- Success rates are high for the small proportion of learners who have completed their functional skills qualifications; however, the progress of apprentices towards achieving this essential element of their qualification is too slow.
- Success rates for learners on work preparation courses are very good, and have improved over the last two years. Success rates on the short vocational training elements of the programme, such as warehousing and forklift truck operation, are also very good, and have been consistently high over the past three years.
- Learners on the employability training programme develop good skills, gaining the confidence to search for and apply for jobs, prepare for interviews and work effectively in a team. In addition, they gain valuable first-step vocational skills. Apprentices develop an appropriate range of occupational skills, such as locating, packing and moving goods in warehouses, repairing vehicles and driving heavy goods vehicles.
- No sustained or significant gaps exist in the achievement of different groups in the employability training programme. A significant gap in 2012/13 between success rates in warehousing and distribution and other programmes has narrowed as achievement rates have improved.
- The vast majority of learners on work preparation short courses progress to one-week accredited vocational courses. For example, in the current year about three-quarters of learners have progressed to level 1 warehousing and distribution and then to forklift truck operation courses.
- System Training does not have complete information about learners' progression to employment, enhanced job roles or further learning. However, the information available indicates that the proportion of unemployed adults moving into work from the employability programme is broadly in line with or above national trends.

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

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement; although learners on the short employability courses develop good work-related skills, too many apprentices make slow progress towards completing their qualifications on time.
- Trainers and assessors do not use the outcomes of initial assessment well enough to set clear and stretching targets for each learner and to plan learning that supports the full range of needs. As a result, learners make slow progress through their programmes.
- The assessment of learners' work varies in quality across vocational areas. Assessors give learners good oral feedback about their work following assessments and within progress reviews. However, assessors do not always explain to learners the focus of assessment and written feedback does not provide enough detail to help the learner reflect on what they must do to improve.
- The arrangements to monitor and record learners' progress do not give a clear enough picture of how quickly and how well they are moving forwards towards completing their qualifications. Too few employers play an active part in supporting assessment or target-setting to improve apprentices' workplace skills.
- Learners on employability training programmes develop their confidence, self-esteem and work ethic which support their progression into employment. Apprentices are improving their workplace skills in carrying out repairs to braking and transmission systems on motor vehicles, and location and movement of goods in warehousing and transportation.
- Teaching staff use their good vocational expertise to help learners to improve their workplace skills and learners are now making steady progress. Following recent professional development, trainers and assessors place a stronger emphasis on developing learners' skills and knowledge through teaching and assessment. Assessors visit learners more frequently to provide good one-to-one coaching and assessment.

- Strong features of the better lessons include good use of creative and challenging activities to meet individual needs. For example, to help learners prepare for the assessment of their speaking and listening skills, tutors use group discussion activities to explore topics such as drink driving laws. Trainers give tailored support to individuals in the use of laptops, helping them adjust font sizes and make effective use of colour and images to enhance their presentations.
- Slow progress towards gaining functional skills qualifications has delayed improvement in success rates. Apprentices now have access to good quality support and training in English and mathematics through classroom-based training and individual support. This is the result of the very recent appointment of specialist teachers.
- Engaging activities in English and mathematics workshops help apprentices to build on their existing skills and knowledge well. For example, motor vehicle apprentices can identify language features such as puns and alliteration in car magazines and use these to improve their own writing. Skilful use of exploratory questioning and examples from everyday life help learners to recall and develop skills in calculating percentages and converting them to fractions. However, teaching staff pay too little attention to developing language skills through vocational training and to improving the accuracy of written work.
- Good-quality resources enhance learning. Practical resources within employability training and warehousing provide interesting and authentic working examples of storage and movement of goods. The use of a simulator offers learners a realistic experience of driving a heavy goods vehicle before actually driving on public roads. Learners access an increasing range of materials through the virtual learning environment to enrich their learning.
- Information, advice and guidance are good on employability and warehousing programmes. Training staff provide learners with information throughout their programmes to help them to plan their long-term goals and refer learners to recruitment agencies to increase their prospects of future employment.
- Apprentices and learners value the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust in their working relationships with staff and other learners. A group discussion on 'name calling' and bullying, for example, widened their knowledge and contributed to cohesive working relationships. However, staff do not always use situations arising in the workplace to extend learners' awareness of equality and diversity issues.
- Staff take appropriate steps to ensure that the learning environment is safe. Learners acquire a good understanding of health and safety and safe working practices in learning and at work.

### **Motor vehicle and transportation operations and maintenance**

#### **Apprenticeships**

Requires improvement

### **Teaching, learning and assessment in motor vehicle and transportation operations and maintenance require improvement because:**

- success rates for motor vehicle apprentices are not high enough; success rates are improving but apprentices' outcomes remain below those of similar providers
- assessors do not set sufficiently focused targets during progress reviews to help apprentices to improve their performance
- assessors do not set apprentices sufficiently challenging written work; consequently, apprentices are unaware of what they need to do to improve
- the written feedback assessors give to apprentices on their work is not detailed enough to guide them in making further progress
- assessors do not routinely help apprentices to improve their English; they fail to identify grammatical and spelling mistakes and do not provide enough guidance in improving accuracy.

**In motor vehicle and transportation operations and maintenance the provider has the following strengths:**

- current apprentices are developing relevant occupational skills and making good progress; for example, in motor vehicle, apprentices work independently and safely, replacing clutches and gearboxes competently to industry standards; in transportation operations and maintenance, apprentices gain driver certificates of professional competence as an additional qualification to enhance their employability skills
- staff make effective use of initial assessment to identify the level of apprentices' skills in English and mathematics and provide additional support when needed; for example, functional skills tutors gave apprentices intensive support through a week-long course to help them prepare for tests in English and make faster progress towards completing their qualifications; employers supported the apprentices well by releasing them for the duration of the event
- assessors help apprentices to improve their skills in mathematics very well as part of their vocational training; for example, in motor vehicle, apprentices use industry specifications to calculate and measure quantities of brake oil accurately; in transportation operations and maintenance they calculate the quantity of materials, carry out inventories, record time and use tachographs accurately
- assessors reinforce the importance of health and safety and safeguarding very well during progress reviews, particularly in transportation operations and maintenance; as a result, apprentices understand their roles and responsibilities and feel safe in their work environment.

**Warehousing and distribution**

**Apprenticeships  
Employability**

Requires improvement

**Teaching, learning and assessment in warehousing and distribution require improvement because:**

- progress for too many apprentices has been slow due to insufficient support and ineffective reviews of progress; recently appointed assessors are now providing a higher level of encouragement and support through more frequent and effective visits and reviews
- learners do not receive a sufficiently thorough diagnostic initial assessment to identify and plan appropriate learning and support; vocational skill scans are not used to identify gaps in skills and knowledge; learners complete learning styles questionnaires but trainers and assessors do not use these to inform learning plans
- the teaching of English and mathematics in vocational sessions does not meet individual needs well enough; staff do not identify learners' weaker areas of English and mathematics routinely in order to develop these skills through vocational training, including for those apprentices who do not require a functional skills qualification to complete their qualification
- trainers and assessors do not manage sessions sufficiently well to maximise learning opportunities; trainers do not always encourage learners to reflect on and review their own learning, and some group activities are ineffective
- trainers and assessors do not consistently make clear the relevance of equality and diversity to the course and the workplace.

**Teaching, learning and assessment in warehousing and distribution have the following strengths:**

- learners on the employability training programme develop good skills and knowledge in warehousing and forklift truck operation, including safe working practices; nearly all achieve their short-course qualifications
- training is effective, combining an appropriate balance of theory and practical sessions; forklift truck trainers provide particularly good individual coaching
- resources for practical learning are good; learners on the employability programme benefit from realistic work environments and well-maintained equipment including forklift and pump trucks; apprentices work in good-quality workplaces
- assessment on the apprenticeship programme is good; new assessors undertake thorough observations and questioning, resulting in improving rates of progress
- information, advice and guidance for employability programmes are good; providers use employer links well to provide up-to-date information on job opportunities.

## Employability training

### 19+ learning programmes

Good

#### Teaching, learning and assessment in employability training are good because:

- learners develop good work-related skills and attitudes required for employment; a significant proportion progress to sustainable employment and achieve relevant qualifications
- trainers provide effective support for learners that ensures they attend regularly, communicate effectively, and present themselves well at interview; as a result, learners have increased confidence in their personal appearance and their ability to respond to employers' expectations
- trainers use their personal experiences of employment and their strong vocational skills to plan a wide range of learning activities that motivate learners well; they encourage learners to have high expectations of what they can achieve
- Systems Group and its subcontractors provide a high standard of resources for practical training; for example, the warehousing and storage training area at one of the subcontractors effectively simulates a typical storage area and this helps learners to prepare well for working in a similar environment
- trainers assess learners very effectively in classroom and practical sessions to help them to review and improve their performance, providing detailed and constructive oral feedback and making good use of digital technology to record learners' performance during practical activities, such as practice interviews
- trainers integrate English and mathematics skill development well into teaching activities; for example, applying basic mathematics skills well during practical forklift truck sessions and developing effective written and oral communications skills when preparing curriculum vitae and delivering group presentations
- staff provide good information, advice and guidance that help learners to prepare well for interviews and apply for jobs; strong links with local employers provide learners with good access to employment opportunities
- trainers reinforce equality and diversity values well, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and creating opportunities for learners to explore issues such as discrimination in the workplace through group discussion.

#### Teaching, learning and assessment in employability training are not yet outstanding because:

- trainers' written feedback to learners is not specific or detailed enough to help all learners to improve the quality of their written work



- trainers do not make effective use of information on learners' prior attainment and backgrounds to set learners sufficiently individualised targets, or to record learners' individual barriers to gaining and sustaining employment.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

## Requires improvement

- Since acquiring the company in January 2015, the new owners of System Training have acted quickly to improve the company's recent weak performance. The managing director has communicated clearly to staff and stakeholders his vision for the organisation and his ambition to improve all aspects of the company's work. Interim managers have begun to implement the company's strategy. Members of the new board are providing good support and challenge to leaders and managers as the company begins to tackle its current weaknesses.
- Leaders and managers plan well to meet national and local needs. They make good use of labour market intelligence about the logistics industry to identify priorities for development, and work successfully with local enterprise partnerships and employers in different parts of the country to identify local needs. Many apprentices gain the skills and qualifications that they need to work as drivers of heavy good vehicles. This contributes to reducing the national shortage of workers in this sector.
- Immediately following the acquisition, the new leadership team carried out a self-assessment of the company that identifies accurately many of the improvements that they need to make. The team has put in place a comprehensive improvement plan with a strong focus on training and development. In recent months, they have provided a wide range of staff development activities in response to the identified areas for improvement, including training on promoting equality and diversity and developing learners' English and mathematics skills. This has already led to some early improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, but has not yet had sufficient impact on improving outcomes for learners.
- Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Lesson observations pinpoint accurately strengths and weaknesses in the provision, and result in detailed action plans for teaching staff. However, managers do not check consistently that assessors have responded to the actions identified and improved the quality of their practice. Managers gather a wide range of feedback from learners and employers, but make too little use of this information when planning improvements.
- Managers make insufficient use of data about learners' progress in order to improve outcomes. The absence of a system to monitor the progress of apprentices means that managers cannot always identify accurately what they need to do to increase the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications on time. Incomplete information about the proportion of unemployed learners on employability courses who find jobs means that managers are unable to evaluate fully how well this programme meets learners' employability needs.
- Since the acquisition the company has strengthened the management of subcontractors and this is now good. Managers monitor closely the performance of subcontractors and provide clear and timely feedback about actions that subcontractors must take to improve performance.
- The management of staff performance requires improvement. Managers are currently developing a performance review process but this is not yet in place. The company has acted quickly to improve or remove particularly weak performance when they have identified it. However, too few members of staff have had performance reviews during the current academic year, and few have targets to improve the quality of their practice. Managers have not yet put in place plans to link performance management to the outcomes of lesson observations.
- The company provides a wide range of training and support that enable staff to develop their skills in promoting equality and inclusion and celebrating diversity in their teaching. As a result, the majority of trainers and assessors successfully develop learners' understanding of equality and prepare learners well for living and working in a diverse society.

- Safeguarding arrangements for all learners are good. An appropriately trained and experienced team of safeguarding officers, led by the designated officer, is proactive in ensuring that all learners are safe. Staff and learners receive clear guidance and information on safeguarding, and recent training has raised the awareness among staff of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Managers monitor closely how well subcontractors ensure that learners are safe and quickly identify actions to improve practice where needed. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive, and ensure that risks to staff and learners are minimised.



**Record of Main Findings (RMF)****System Training 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	3	3	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	3	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Motor vehicle</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Transportation operations and maintenance</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Employability training</b>	<b>2</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>	5,753								
<b>Managing Director</b>	Peter Brooks								
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	September 2012								
<b>Website address</b>	http://www.system-training.com								
<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	1,152	N/A	2,385	N/A	2	N/A	2	
<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+		
	235	124	25	53	0		0		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A								
<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>■ FLT Training Ltd</li> <li>■ Total Logistics training Ltd</li> <li>■ ALM Training Services Ltd</li> <li>■ All About Training Ltd</li> <li>■ Icetec Training Solutions Ltd</li> <li>■ Free To Learn Ltd</li> </ul>								

## Contextual information

System Training Limited is a national training provider for the logistics industry. It provides government-funded apprenticeships to meet the needs of the industry and employability training for unemployed adults. The employability training is delivered in the south-east and north of England through six subcontractors. The company was owned by the Bibby Line Group from 2008 to the end of 2014. In January 2015, the company was acquired by the Assist Resourcing Group which is the current owner.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Jan Smith HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the deputy manager for 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, 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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