

# Dawn Hodge Associates Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

22–25 February 2016

**Overall effectiveness****Outstanding**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for learners                        | Outstanding |
| Apprenticeships                              | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding provider

- Leaders and managers have maintained the outstanding outcomes and quality of teaching, learning and assessment identified at the previous inspection, through a relentless focus on self-evaluation and continuous improvement.
- The provider has outstanding partnerships with employers and works with them very effectively to ensure apprentices' success.
- Staff are highly qualified, knowledgeable and very experienced; they have a high degree of credibility in the care sector.
- The provider manages its subcontractors very well to ensure that the quality of provision they deliver meets the company's own high standards.
- Trainers provide excellent coaching and individual support for apprentices, which enables them to develop new knowledge and skills rapidly.
- Apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills and use them effectively at work. Trainers provide apprentices with constructive feedback on their written work, which helps them improve.
- Apprentices develop particularly good employability skills, including problem solving and teamwork, which are valued highly by employers.
- Apprentices make rapid progress towards achieving their qualifications. Staff monitor apprentices' progress closely and provide additional support when required.
- The standard of apprentices' work is high and often beyond the requirements of their qualifications. The quality of evidence in apprentices' portfolios is excellent.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications, including functional skills in English and mathematics, is very high. Trainers prepare apprentices for their assessments very effectively and the vast majority pass at the first attempt.
- A small minority of apprentices' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not sufficiently developed for them to be able to make full use of available learning resources.
- Not all apprentices are sufficiently aware of the specific dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

# **Full report**

## **Information about the provider**

- Dawn Hodge Associates Limited (DHA) specialises in providing training and qualifications to the care sector. The company has a head office in Neston and operates across the north west of England. DHA works mainly with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in adult social care, childcare and supported living settings.
- In addition to the 700 learners on care programmes, DHA has apprentices in a small number of other subjects including 88 apprentices in business administration and 55 apprentices in hairdressing and beauty therapy. DHA directly delivers most of the care provision and has three subcontractors that provide additional care provision and provision in the other vocational areas. The DHA staff team comprises 14 trainers and nine management/administrative staff.

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

- Ensure that trainers develop apprentices' ICT skills and confidence, where appropriate, so that apprentices can access a wider range of resources independently to support their learning.
- Reinforce the dangers of radicalisation and extremism with apprentices so that they are well placed to protect themselves and their service users from all types of abuse.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Since the last inspection DHA has continued to implement very successfully its mission to provide high-quality training and support for the care sector. Apprentices' outcomes are very high and the outstanding quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been maintained. DHA is viewed as a sector leader in care training and enjoys excellent links with Skills for Care and other stakeholders. DHA has a strong track record of leading on new initiatives in the care sector.
- Leaders and managers have a relentless drive to ensure a high-quality experience for learners and use a good range of quality improvement activities to do so. Observations of teaching, learning and assessment are rigorous and have a good focus on learning.
- Relationships with employers are outstanding, involving the managing director and all staff. Two employer engagement officers provide excellent support to employers, which includes frequent meetings to review apprentices' progress and identify any concerns. They provide good advice on sector developments and staff training opportunities. Employers particularly value the regular networking meetings that include updates on issues such as changes in the care sector and funding.
- Programmes are planned exceptionally well to ensure they meet the needs of local stakeholders, employers and service users. A strong focus on improving apprentices' employment, English and mathematics skills, often well beyond the requirements of the programmes, prepares them very well for their future careers.
- Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Self-evaluation involves all staff and takes good account of apprentices' and employers' feedback. Staff analyse areas that require improvement thoroughly and respond rapidly to rectify any shortcomings.
- Daily informal meetings between senior managers ensure that they have a thorough knowledge of the progress towards operational targets, such as the recruitment and achievement of apprentices. Monthly formal senior management meetings are used well to review progress against the business development plan. However, these meetings are not supported well enough by incisive reports that summarise the wealth of information gathered by managers.
- Communication between leaders, managers, staff and employers is exemplary with a constant focus on improvement. Managers quickly identify any issues that may have an impact on the quality of experience of apprentices and take rapid action to tackle them. For example, concerns about the conduct of an assessor or an apprentice missing an appointment are swiftly addressed.
- DHA selects its subcontractors carefully to ensure that their values align with its own and to ensure that the provision offered meets regional and local needs. DHA manages its subcontractors very effectively and ensures that the quality of provision they deliver meets its own high standards. Quarterly meetings between DHA managers and subcontractors provide excellent opportunities to discuss performance, share good practice and keep up to date on current issues.
- The performance management of staff is very effective. Staff are valued highly for their contribution to meeting DHA's mission. Regular supervision and one-to-one meetings between staff and their managers use evidence of performance from a range of sources. Monthly standardisation meetings focus strongly on relevant professional development. Staff underperformance is quickly and effectively tackled.
- Highly qualified and vocationally experienced managers and staff share exceptionally high expectations of apprentices and work hard to support them to achieve their potential. DHA trainers hold advanced qualifications in care and are well regarded in the sector.
- Staff provide apprentices with very effective initial information, advice and guidance, in conjunction with employers, to ensure that qualifications are carefully tailored to meet employers' and apprentices' needs and that apprentices are ready to make the necessary commitment to the programmes.
- DHA has a very strong culture of equality and diversity that underpins its work and creates a positive working and learning environment. Staff and apprentices are well aware of the importance of preventing discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - CareTech's recent acquisition of DHA has added a supportive level of oversight with an emphasis on promoting further growth and sharing good practice with other CareTech training holdings. The managing director provides monthly progress reports to CareTech.
  - The managing director provides good challenge and support to other staff and has created a strong culture of continuous improvement.

## ■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Well-informed managers have an excellent approach to raising awareness of the need for vigilance among staff to identify and address any safeguarding concerns either for apprentices or their service users. Any such concerns are dealt with rapidly and reviewed to identify any learning points.
- Learners have a very good awareness of how to identify and report threats to their own or clients' safety. Effective Safer Recruitment and induction practices for new staff ensure that assessors can fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities well. Staff have been subject to appropriate disclosure and barring checks.
- 'Prevent' training has increased staff awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and improved their confidence in how to recognise risks. Staff are now starting to increase apprentices' understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Trainers provide excellent individual coaching for apprentices, which is very effective in developing their skills and knowledge rapidly. Trainers adapt their approach to meet the needs of individuals and their circumstances well. Trainers use questions and professional discussions very successfully to assess learning and deepen apprentices' understanding.
- Apprentices are highly motivated and keen to learn. They make swift progress towards their intended qualifications, and in their performance at work. For example, one advanced apprentice has improved internet safety within her company as a result of her enhanced knowledge.
- Apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills well and demonstrate their improved skills at work, such as when writing notes and completing client records. In most cases, trainers link English and mathematics learning well to vocational topics to make it interesting and relevant.
- Trainers are highly skilled and knowledgeable in their vocational areas and are highly credible among employers and apprentices. They use their vocational knowledge to create timely links between theory and practical work. For instance, in hairdressing, trainers provide employers with a list of tasks to complete with their apprentices in the workplace, with clear timescales, to ensure good coordination between theory and practical work.
- Apprentices work to very high standards, often to a level beyond the requirements of their qualifications. Care apprentices demonstrate their increased confidence in their skilful and friendly approach to their service users. Apprentices develop excellent research skills through relevant work-related projects.
- Assessment planning is very effective and maximises opportunities for apprentices to make swift progress. The quality of evidence in apprentices' portfolios is excellent, with a wide range of evidence including witness testimonies, observation reports, supervision records, written responses to knowledge questions and records of professional discussions. Trainers are very flexible and visit apprentices in the evenings, at nights and at weekends to observe them for assessment purposes.
- Trainers provide apprentices with clear feedback on their work that is prompt, constructive and helps them to improve, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Trainers and their team managers provide very good learning and personal support for apprentices to aid their progress. They use initial assessment well to identify specific support needs such as dyslexia, and then plan effectively to provide the specific help required. Trainers know their apprentices very well and quickly become aware of any personal issues that might impede progress. Trainers provide comprehensive personal support to help apprentices deal with issues in their personal or work lives such as pregnancy or ill-health.
- Trainers review apprentices' progress comprehensively and set specific targets that are clear and challenging. However, in a small minority of instances, targets are not specific enough.
- Apprentices understand fully the requirements and demands of their programmes. In care, staff use their extensive knowledge of the industry to help apprentices decide on the most suitable units of the qualifications they should undertake. Trainers encourage apprentices to fulfil ambitious career plans.
- Most apprentices develop their vocational knowledge and ICT skills very well through relevant and interesting activities. One advanced apprentice was supported skilfully by the trainer to prepare an electronic presentation on types of medication, which he delivered to colleagues at work. Trainers often make very effective use of online resources such as those on the Quality Care Commission and Alzheimer's Society websites to aid learning. However, a minority of apprentices, particularly those who are less confident, do not practise and develop their ICT skills to enable them to access a wider range of learning resources, or enhance their career prospects.

- Apprentices have a thorough understanding of equality, diversity and British values and demonstrate these principles throughout their work. These topics are covered well at induction and reinforced by trainers at each progress review.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding**

- Apprentices take enormous pride in their work and have very positive attitudes to their learning and progress. For some apprentices this is the first time that they have enjoyed, or achieved success in, formal education. Apprentices develop confidence in their abilities and the contribution they can make at work.
- Apprentices develop excellent employability skills including problem solving and teamwork. They quickly become assets to their employers and in some instances help to improve working practices. For example, one learner who is a senior care manager has introduced a new system to monitor staff attendance and timekeeping that has helped to reduce absences.
- Trainers readily relate new learning to practical work situations, which helps apprentices to consolidate their knowledge and skills. For example, one learner on a leadership and management programme has improved her skills in writing care plans. The plans now identify specialist support needs more comprehensively and service users benefit from the engagement of external staff such as district nurses and social workers.
- Employers are very supportive and provide care apprentices with a good range of additional qualifications and in-house training that enhance their development. Topics include health and safety, safeguarding, dementia awareness, end of life care and diabetes awareness.
- Apprentices feel safe and are acutely aware of how to maintain their safety and well-being. Good attention is given to developing their understanding of health and safety and safeguarding practices. Apprentices are encouraged and are confident to highlight issues of concern. For example, one apprentice raised concerns about lone late night working which the employer very quickly and effectively resolved. However, not all apprentices are sufficiently aware of the specific dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Apprentices develop their independent learning skills very effectively through the completion of workbooks and independent research that is carefully supported and overseen by trainers. Trainers maintain regular contact by telephone and email between face-to-face meetings.
- Apprentices attend their monthly meetings with their trainers well. On occasions apprentices are unable to keep their planned appointments due to personal responsibilities or work demands. Alternative plans are then swiftly put in place to ensure that apprentices do not miss out on learning or fall behind. Trainers inform employers very promptly when planned meetings are rescheduled.

### **Outcomes for learners are outstanding**

- The vast majority of apprentices are making rapid progress towards their qualifications and are on track to complete their programmes by their intended end date. Staff monitor apprentices' progress very closely and swiftly provide additional support and visits, should they be required. Apprentices develop confidence, vocational knowledge and work skills rapidly.
- The proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes has increased steadily over the last three years and is very high. A large majority of apprentices complete their programmes by the planned end date.
- In health and social care provision apprentices' success rates are particularly high at advanced and higher levels and are considerably above the national rates. At intermediate level success rates are high. Staff turnover in the care sector is often high and trainers are particularly vigilant in following up apprentices who have left their employer, to encourage them to continue their studies in their new workplace. In business administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy, success rates are well above national rates.
- Apprentices' achievements in functional skills in English and mathematics are very high. The overwhelming majority of apprentices pass their functional skills assessments at the first attempt. Staff challenge apprentices very well, encouraging them to complete functional skills qualifications at a higher level than required by the apprenticeship framework, and many do so successfully.
- DHA has succeeded in reducing the achievement gap between male and female apprentices. Having analysed carefully the reasons for the relatively lower achievement of males, DHA has recruited male staff members to provide role models. DHA provides intensive additional support where required, and the achievement of apprentices who have a disability is high. The number of apprentices from minority ethnic

groups is too low to compare their achievements reliably.

- DHA's detailed data on the destinations of apprentices show that upon completion, the vast majority of apprentices remain in employment in the care sector. Where work roles allow and supervisory experience is available, employers encourage apprentices to progress to higher-level programmes. Intermediate care apprentices complete some aspects of the advanced award and are therefore prepared well to progress on to the higher-level programme when the opportunity arises, or when they feel ready to do so. Around a quarter of apprentices who complete their programme are awarded a pay rise immediately in recognition of their additional skills and the contribution they make at work.

## Provider details

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Type of provider  | Independent learning provider                                      |
| Age range of learners   | 16-18/19+  |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 1,526  |
| Principal/CEO   | Ms Caroline Murphy   |
| Website address   | <a href="http://www.dhassociates.co.uk">www.dhassociates.co.uk</a> |

## 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 |     |
|--|--------------------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|  | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18    | 19+ | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18             | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)                                     | N/A                            | N/A | N/A      | 19  | N/A     | N/A | N/A               | N/A |
|  | Intermediate                   |     | Advanced |     | Higher  |     |                   |     |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age                                    | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18    | 19+ | 16-18   | 19+ |                   |     |
|  | 39                             | 406 | 10       | 287 | N/A     | 98  |                   |     |
| Number of traineeships   | 16-19                          |     | 19+      |     | Total   |     |                   |     |
|  | N/A                            |     | N/A      |     | N/A     |     |                   |     |
| Number of learners aged 14-16  | N/A                            |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| Funding received from  | Skills Funding Agency (SFA)    |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | ■ Go Smart Limited             |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
|  | ■ Partnership Training Limited |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
|  | ■ PBC Associates Limited       |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pat Hornsby, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Kathryn Townsley            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Stephen Miller              | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Beverley Cross              | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Patrick McKinley            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Howard Browes               | Ofsted Inspector        |

The above team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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