

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



29 April 2016

Ms D Newcomb  
Prostart Training  
Trent Valley Business Centre  
28 High Street  
Long Eaton  
Nottingham  
NG10 1LL

Dear Ms Newcomb

### **Short inspection of Prostart Training**

Following the short inspection on 7 and 8 April 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in March 2012.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

- Leaders and managers have established clear strategies that prioritise the care, safety and support of all apprentices and trainees. The senior management team make good use of partnership working to achieve their business goals, while contributing effectively to the attainment of both local and national skill priorities. These, and the associated vision and mission objectives, are appropriately understood by all staff.
- For the significant majority of apprentices the achievement of training outcomes is good. Apprentices are making good gains in the acquisition of personal and employability skills. Trainers have high aspirations for all apprentices and learners that help inspire them to achieve further. Leaders and managers have identified significant shortfalls in the partnership model for traineeship delivery and are working to rectify them.
- Since the previous inspection, you have appropriately invested in improving the capacity of all staff to deliver high-quality training that protects learners through the application of robust safeguarding arrangements.
- You have maintained the strengths noted at the previous inspection and rectified the weaknesses. Both you and your senior managers have a realistic and detailed understanding of what further improvements are necessary and have implemented appropriate remedial actions.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have further strengthened safeguarding arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose and protect all learners. They ensure that the regular updating of safeguarding procedures also addresses the 'Prevent' duty and reflects the demands of current national guidelines. All staff receive appropriate initial safeguarding training and subsequently undertake refresher courses to both promote and test their understanding. Managers robustly monitor and review targets and associated actions that lead to improvements in the effectiveness of safeguarding and 'Prevent' measures. The designated safeguarding officer uses good links with two safeguarding boards to identify and respond to local and regional objectives.

Learners receive detailed safeguarding information and training at induction and throughout their programme. As a result, they are able to better deal with incidents they experience in the workplace. For example, apprentices dealing with personal enquiries in a healthcare trust partnership are highly skilled at considering safeguarding strategies to protect their physical and psychological well-being when dealing with customers who are dissatisfied with the service they have received from the hospital.

Learners feel safe and protected during their training. Where learners raise a concern, managers respond quickly and appropriately, often using the good links with external agencies to provide specialist support. Since the previous inspection, managers have introduced sound e-safety policies and procedures to protect learners. During training and progress reviews, trainers place a high priority on addressing the 'Prevent' duty. However, you recognise that not all apprentices and trainees have a good enough appreciation of British values. Improvement initiatives to address this have yet to have a significant impact.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and managers have established high expectations of staff performance and monitor standards against agreed objectives well. Trainers meet regularly with their line managers to review key data that allows an evaluation of their effectiveness in facilitating learners' progress. Performance management includes good use of targets within appraisals to enable staff to understand how future performance improvements will benefit learners. Managers successfully identify staff performance shortfalls and implement appropriate remedial action and support. All staff who undertake learner assessment receive good feedback that helps them to improve. However, in a small minority of cases, managers do not follow up the agreed actions quickly enough.
- Managers continue to make good use of stakeholders' views and data to formulate the detailed self-assessment of programme quality. They have identified a wide range of actions to raise standards and subject them to

appropriate monitoring that drives up standards. In this academic year, managers have been particularly rigorous in the use of the improvement plan. Overall, you have successfully tackled all of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. However, deadlines for action completion are not always realistic and do not always align with staff targets. As a result, a minority of expected improvements are delayed or too slow to enhance the quality of training for all apprentices and trainees.

- Managers make good use of direct observation of taught sessions to evaluate quality. Since the previous inspection, managers have ensured the improvement of all observers' skills in making evaluative judgements. This in turn has supported the development of lesson plans and schemes of work that focus clearly on the learning experience. In addition, trainers now receive very informative feedback that helps them develop their professional practice. The standard of teaching, learning and assessment overall is good. Managers make good use of an appropriate range of other quality assurance arrangements to deliver improvements. For example, they utilise regular apprentice progress tracking meetings to raise the quality of both the planning and delivery of functional skills. Managers have rightly identified the slow achievement of functional skills as a major factor in slowing apprentices' progress and achievement by the planned end date. In response, trainers have received training and support from a functional skills specialist to improve the quality of both on- and off-the-job training. Managers have revised initial assessment arrangements so that, where needed, learners now more quickly benefit from additional learning support that includes good specialist teaching. This support has started to help apprentices improve their application of technical knowledge within the workplace. For example, an apprentice has used his newly acquired information and communication technology (ICT) skills to help become more efficient within his logistics role.
- Current data indicates that achievement rates for English, mathematics and ICT at level 1 and 2 have significantly improved when compared to previous years.
- As identified at the previous inspection, overall apprenticeship success rates are good and well above national averages. Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is also good. Apprentices are able to work towards a wide range of additional ICT qualifications. Both the uptake and achievement of these awards are good. Overall success rates for the small number of higher apprenticeships require improvement. Managers have identified achievement gaps within the apprenticeship programme, most significantly between males and females and those with a declared moderate learning difficulty when compared to apprentices not receiving support. In response, managers have instigated research to identify causes for the discrepancies, but have not isolated specific reasons for the differences in achievement rates. They are carrying out further investigation to allow for the formulation of a relevant improvement action plan.

- The vast majority of current apprentices are making good progress and the standard of completed work is high. They confirm that the training received has allowed them to be more effective and confident in the workplace. For example, apprentices in a medical centre state that the development of their functional skills has enabled them to complete complex tasks, including the completion of detailed work case study reports, meeting minutes and the tracking of clinical records. It has also led to improved technical skills and knowledge that allow them to take on more responsibility in the workplace.
- The partnership model, with an external provider, is failing to ensure that the traineeship programme provides a consistently individualised learning experience that meets trainees' needs and develops employability skills effectively. You recognise that the programme does not provide sufficient time for trainers to help trainees overcome what are often significant barriers to learning. As a result, English and mathematics functional skills achievement rates are low, as are progression rates. By contrast, for the small number of learners on your own programme, progression to employment, training or education is good though functional skills achievement rates require further improvement. For all trainees, progression to apprenticeships is low.
- Managers have improved the monitoring of subcontractor performance since the last inspection. Regular meetings and reviews have successfully secured quality improvement that reflects the standards experienced by learners in Prostart's directly delivered provision.
- Managers do not ensure that trainers consistently provide apprentices and trainees with sufficiently specific and challenging short-term targets to help them improve and make swifter progress. Trainers too often set targets solely linked to the completion of the programme rather than the setting of personal objectives that consider, for example, learners' welfare and personal development. However, assessors are very good at initiating verbal discussions to help learners consider their health while at work, for example discussing the benefits of healthy eating.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- the traineeship programme, delivered in conjunction with an external provider, effectively individualises learning within a realistic time period to address trainees' needs fully
- the quality of short-term target setting is improved for all learners so they increase the pace and overall level of their achievement
- the success rates for higher apprenticeships are significantly raised
- trainers improve the promotion of British values to all learners so they gain a good appreciation of how they apply to their workplace and personal lives.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bragg  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

**Information about the inspection**

During the short inspection the quality and contractual manager, as nominee, assisted us. Inspectors met with senior leaders, managers, staff, employers, apprentices and trainees. Key documents, including those related to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding, were reviewed. Inspectors visited training and workplaces to discuss with learners their experience of the training they receive, assess their progress and scrutinise the quality of completed work. In addition, we observed teaching, learning and assessment.