

# Unique Training North East Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

19–22 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for learners	Inadequate
Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate provider

- Governance is inadequate; the two directors have not established suitable arrangements to enable them to be scrutinised, challenged or held to account for the overall effectiveness of the provider, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the outcomes for learners.
- Arrangements to safeguard learners are not effective.
- Leaders do not collect and analyse information and data sufficiently well to inform them of important aspects about the performance of the organisation or to plan the curriculum to meet the skills development needs of the North East.
- The proportion of intermediate and advanced apprentices who achieve their learning goals has declined significantly over recent years and is now too low and none of the higher apprentices have successfully achieved their qualifications since the programme began.
- The large majority of apprentices make slow progress and managers and training coordinators take insufficient action to improve the progress that apprentices make.
- Performance management arrangements are ineffective; managers fail to hold training coordinators to account for the slow progress of apprentices and the significant decline in achievement rates over recent years.
- Managers have failed to ensure that apprentices receive sufficient off-the-job learning to enable them to improve their skills and knowledge quickly enough.
- Training coordinators do not plan sufficient learning activities for apprentices, which slows their progress, and the activities they do plan are not sufficiently challenging.
- A weakness at the previous inspection – the delayed delivery of English and mathematics teaching, support and assessment – still slows the learning and achievement of a significant minority of apprentices and those that are most able still have insufficient opportunities to gain higher skills in English and mathematics.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The inspection team found no key strengths.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Unique Training North East Limited (UTNEL) was established in 2011. The provider is jointly owned by the chief executive officers (CEOs) of two independent learning providers, Life Skills Central Limited and PSB Training Limited. These two training providers act as subcontractors to UTNEL and staff from these providers deliver all of the training and assessment. A combination of leaders and managers from both companies constitute the leadership and management team of UTNEL with the CEO of PSB Training Limited undertaking the role of contracts director.
- UTNEL provides apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher levels across subjects in hospitality and catering, business management, administration and customer services, health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and retail. The majority of apprentices are in the North East of England although a few are in the North West and Yorkshire. Unemployment rates in the North East are higher than the national average.

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

- Without delay, managers must review safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that all learners are kept safe, all safeguarding disclosures and incidents of bullying and harassment are recorded and dealt with appropriately and staff and learners are aware of and protected from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- As a matter of urgency, implement the changes necessary to ensure that appropriate mechanisms for governance are established and through these ensure that the reporting and reviewing of performance are strengthened so that leaders and managers are held to account for the quality of provision.
- Ensure that leaders have access to a sufficient range of timely and reliable data to inform their judgements about the quality of provision and the impact of actions they have taken to improve the provision.
- Leaders must make better use of information about the skills development needs of the North East to plan a range of apprenticeships that better meets employers' needs and provides more opportunities for local people to improve their chances of securing sustained employment.
- Improve the proportion of apprentices who achieve their learning goals and who do so within the planned time by significantly improving the planning and delivery of all aspects of apprentices' programmes so that they receive sufficient training, support and assessment to make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Significantly strengthen performance management arrangements so that:
  - training coordinators are held to account for the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment they provide for apprentices and the progress that the apprentices they are responsible for make
  - the support, training and personal development that training coordinators require to improve their practice and deliver more frequent and challenging learning activities are identified and provided.
- Implement the recommendation from the previous inspection in September 2014 to adjust the timing of English and mathematics assessments so that apprentices, especially the most able, make good progress. In addition to this, leaders must use improved performance management procedures to ensure that the quality of English and mathematics teaching, learning and assessment improves and becomes consistently good.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and managers have been unsuccessful in developing a culture of high performance or rapid improvement at UTNEL since the previous inspection. Strategic plans fail to articulate ambitious targets to improve the quality of teaching and learning or outcomes for apprentices. This has led to many of the recommendations from the previous inspection report not being addressed.
- Performance management arrangements are inadequate. Leaders and managers have failed to develop effective systems to set strategic and operational targets for the business or to identify and deal with staff underperformance. The current process is perfunctory and not fit for purpose. Targets set for training coordinators primarily focus on compliance and recruitment. Leaders and managers do not hold training coordinators sufficiently to account for the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment they provide for apprentices and the progress that the apprentices they are responsible for make.
- Leaders do not collect and analyse data sufficiently well to inform them of important aspects of the performance of the organisation. Too much focus is placed on the completion of qualifications as opposed to the progress that apprentices are making in developing and improving their skills. This has resulted in over a quarter of all current apprentices not achieving their qualification within the planned timescales and almost three quarters of all apprentices not making the expected progress on their programme.
- The organisation and management of the apprenticeship provision is weak. Many apprentices do not receive the amount of off-the-job-learning that their apprenticeship agreements state they should. As a result, apprentices receive insufficient training and challenge to acquire new skills and knowledge before they are assessed. Leaders have not responded sufficiently to the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the support that apprentices receive to develop their skills in English and mathematics skills. The majority of apprentices make slow progress in these subjects.
- The process for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is ineffective. Observations are infrequent and are not sufficiently critical or evaluative about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the impact this has on apprentices' progress. Action plans developed following observations are equally weak. Not all observations result in action plans but for those that do, they lack clarity about what training coordinators need to do to improve and managers do not monitor sufficiently whether actions have been implemented.
- The process of self-assessment does not accurately evaluate performance across the organisation and is not sufficiently critical. The summary produced by leaders is overly positive and does not reflect the weaknesses of provision that inspectors found throughout the inspection. Managers have failed to identify many of the underlying reasons for poor performance. Consequently, actions set by leaders in UTNEL's quality improvement plan are not adequate to address weaknesses in the quality of provision.
- Leaders do not work sufficiently well with other providers or bodies such as the local enterprise partnership to plan the curriculum to meet the skills priorities of the North East region. Leaders have not developed a strategy or targets to contribute to local priorities. For example, skills in construction engineering, finance, insurance and information technology are under-represented throughout the region. However, UTNEL has no plans to provide more opportunities for local people to improve their chances of securing sustained employment by delivering apprenticeships in these areas.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Managers have not ensured that training coordinators are sufficiently equipped to challenge apprentices to improve their knowledge about British values and the principles of living in modern Britain through their learning and assessment activities. This has led to many apprentices not having an understanding of how these values affect them in their workplaces and local communities.

### The governance of the provider

- The two directors of UTNEL have not established suitable arrangements for governance. No governing body or non-executive board scrutinises or challenges the performance of senior leaders, or holds them to account for outcomes of apprentices or the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This lack of oversight has contributed to the quality of provision and outcomes for learners declining since the previous inspection.

### The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective

- Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard learners. Although learners state they feel safe, too many do not have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding, how to make a safeguarding disclosure, or how to raise a concern if they experience bullying or harassment.

- The process of recording safeguarding disclosures and incidents of bullying and harassment is flawed. Training coordinators are not aware of their obligations to safeguard all learners such as the need to inform the designated safeguarding officer of disclosures made to them.
- Leaders and managers have not implemented the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty swiftly enough. A few training coordinators only undertook training in the 'Prevent' duty during the week that the inspection took place. Many learners do not have an understanding of the risks of radicalisation or extremism in relation to their locality.
- Leaders and managers do not use local intelligence, the police, local safeguarding teams and other agencies to identify particular risks in relation to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to inform their own policies. Additionally, there are no agreed protocols in place to share information with other agencies in relation to safeguarding disclosures.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Almost all learners, 201 of 209, are apprentices and most are adults. The eight remaining learners are adults who are following NVQ programmes in their workplaces. Their programmes are delivered by the same training coordinators that deliver apprenticeships. Their experiences on the programme and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that they receive does not differ from those of apprentices. Just over a third of apprentices follow intermediate level programmes, a fifth follow higher-level programmes and the remainder follow advanced programmes. The majority of apprentices are on hospitality and catering programmes. Around a quarter of apprentices follow programmes in business management, administration and customer services. The remainder follow programmes in health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and retail.
- Induction arrangements are weak, resulting in apprentices and their employers having a poor understanding of how all aspects of their apprenticeship programme fit together. Training coordinators do not provide apprentices with sufficient information to make them aware of the key deadlines they have to meet to enable them to make progress. Training coordinators do not use the results of initial assessment carried out to identify apprentices' prior knowledge, skills and support requirements sufficiently well to plan programmes that meet apprentices' needs or individual employment situations.
- Most training coordinators have insufficiently high expectations of apprentices. They plan and deliver insufficient learning activities for apprentices. Those that they do deliver lack challenge, particularly for the most able. As a result, too many apprentices make slow progress.
- Apprentices' individual records of learning activities and assessments confirm that for the majority, these are insufficiently frequent to enable them to make good progress. A business administration apprentice has not achieved any qualification units in the ten months she has been on her programme and records held by UTNEL show that she has received very little training from her training coordinator.
- When off-the-job learning does take place, the majority of training coordinators use a good range of fit-for-purpose learning resources; for example DVDs, online searches and references, workbooks and magazines to engage apprentices in their learning. However, if apprentices are struggling to complete aspects of their programmes or they require additional learning support, training coordinators do not make sufficient additional arrangements or adjustments to apprentices' planned learning and assessment activities to ensure that they can complete all the requirements of their programme.
- Learning activities provided for a minority of business administration and customer service apprentices are well planned. Through these, apprentices improve their knowledge and understanding. Planned learning sessions for the majority of apprentices, for example in hospitality and catering, focus too narrowly on assessment with insufficient activities planned to enable apprentices to explore new topics and improve their knowledge and understanding.
- The large majority of reviews of progress are weak. Employers are often not involved or invited to contribute their views about the progress that apprentices are making in developing their technical skills or in improving their understanding of the professional standards required by the sector they work in. Review records lack detail. They rarely record any learning that has taken place and personal development and progress targets set for apprentices are insufficiently specific or demanding.
- The majority of apprentices do not receive adequate training or support to enable them to develop and improve their English and mathematical skills. Training coordinators responsible for delivering specialist English and mathematics input plan this too late in apprentices' programmes. When it does take place, it is not sufficiently good enough to help all apprentices, particularly those who are most able, to improve their skills in these subjects. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Many of the apprentices who are beyond their planned end date but have not yet achieved are in this position because managers and training coordinators have made insufficient plans to help them complete English

and mathematics functional skills qualifications.

- Although the majority of training coordinators are aware that they need to actively promote diversity in learning, this is too variable and requires improvement. One training coordinator used a recent news article covering the Prime Minister's announcement of a fund to enable Muslim women to learn English as the basis of a thoughtful discussion with an apprentice. Through this, the apprentice was challenged well to consider how not being able to speak English could be a barrier to participation in British society. However, not all training coordinators have the skills, confidence or awareness to challenge apprentices sufficiently to consider issues of diversity in their work situations or daily lives.
- The large majority of apprentices are employed when they start their apprenticeship. The early provision of information, advice and guidance is effective in helping apprentices and their employer to make appropriate initial choices about qualification options so that these are relevant to their job role. Most employers value apprenticeships and provide purposeful development of on-the-job occupational, technical and employability skills for their apprentices.

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

### **are inadequate**

- Training coordinators provide insufficient support and training for apprentices. As a result, too many make slow progress in developing and receiving accreditation for the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their learning aims within planned timescales.
- As a result of the poor planning and the delayed delivery of key elements of apprentices' programmes such as functional skills training and assessment, a high proportion make slow progress in developing key employability skills such as English and mathematics. As a result, too many do not achieve their core learning aims or are delayed, in some cases by significant periods of time, in achieving these.
- Almost all training and assessment takes place in apprentices' workplaces. The suitability of the venues to enable apprentices to concentrate on their work and make progress varies considerably from good to inadequate. A food and beverages apprentice receives training in the noisy public bar area of the public house during times when it is open to customers.
- Most apprentices are employed before they start their apprenticeship with UTNEL. Apprentices receive a limited range of advice and guidance at the start of their programmes, which outlines progression opportunities within the industry or commercial sector they work in. UTNEL do not provide apprentices with access to independent careers advice and guidance. As a result, the majority of apprentices have limited awareness of the steps they could take to develop challenging plans for their future careers.
- Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe in their workplaces but they have insufficient understanding of how to raise concerns if they do not feel safe or experience bullying or harassment. Although review documentation prompts training coordinators to refer to the 'Prevent' agenda, apprentices have a limited awareness of what this is, what it means to them or how to identify or protect themselves and others from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Although recorded as an area to cover on standard paperwork, training, assessment and review activities provide only superficial opportunities for apprentices to explore personal, social and ethical issues. Apprentices are not sufficiently prompted or encouraged through learning and assessment activities to develop their understanding of their rights and responsibilities in British society.
- Apprentices understand what their employers expect of them and they develop good attitudes to work. They are punctual and attend well in their workplaces. The majority of apprentices develop an appropriate range of commercial and technical skills through their job roles, which helps them to gain confidence and prepares them to undertake work that is more challenging and requires greater responsibility.

### **Outcomes for learners**

### **are inadequate**

- The proportion of intermediate and advanced apprentices who achieve their qualification has declined significantly over the last three years. In 2014/15 less than half of those who completed their programmes with UTNEL achieved successfully. There has been little improvement on this in the current year. Of the apprentices that do achieve, only a minority do so within the planned time.
- The proportion of higher apprentices who successfully achieve all aspects of their programmes is inadequate. Since UTNEL started delivering higher apprenticeships in 2012/13, around forty higher apprentices have left their programmes but none of these achieved successfully.

- The progress that apprentices currently on programmes with UTNEL are making towards improving their skills, and achieving their qualifications and learning goals relative to their starting points is inadequate. The large majority are either well beyond their planned end date, or behind target to achieve in the planned time. Despite UTNEL leaders being aware of this situation through the risk register they use, training coordinators take little or no action to improve the progress apprentices are making.
- The majority of apprentices acquire relevant vocational and commercial skills through the work they do with their employers. Training coordinators deliver insufficient additional off-the-job training to enable apprentices to build on these skills quickly enough to make good progress.
- Apprentices make slow progress in improving their skills in English and mathematics. Identified as a weakness at the previous inspection, the delayed delivery of English and mathematics teaching, support and assessment still slows the learning and achievement of the majority of apprentices. Apprentices that are most able still have insufficient opportunities to gain higher skills in English and mathematics.
- The decline in outcomes for apprentices applies to all groups. As a result, there are no significant differences in the achievement of male and female apprentices. There are too few apprentices from minority ethnic groups to make any meaningful comparison, as is the case for apprentices with an identified learning difficulty and/or disability.
- The large majority of apprentices who successfully achieve their qualification remain in employment. Although UTNEL record apprentices who remain in employment, they do not keep sufficient records to evaluate how successful programmes have been in enabling apprentices to progress to higher levels of education or training or achieve promotions at work. UTNEL offer a limited range of apprenticeships that do not align sufficiently well with local area priorities. Although apprenticeships are offered from intermediate to higher level, there are too few opportunities for apprentices to progress to further or higher levels of learning.

## Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	188
Principal/CEO	Barry Evans
Website address	<a href="http://www.uniquetraining-ne.co.uk">www.uniquetraining-ne.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+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	N/A	1	N/A	N/A
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	11	63	8	81	2	36		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
	<div><div></div>Life Skills Central Limited</div> <div><div></div>PSB Training Limited</div>							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Malcolm Fraser, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derek Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Pat Hornsby	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the contracts director, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. 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 students 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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