

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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1 July 2016

Mr Brian Quinn  
Operations Director  
Training Plus Merseyside Limited  
62–64 Lime Street  
Liverpool  
L1 1JN

Dear Mr Quinn

### **Short inspection of Training Plus Merseyside Limited**

Following the short inspection on 8, 9 and 10 June 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Training Plus Merseyside Limited (TPM) was judged to be good in December 2011.

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

You and your senior leadership team have tackled effectively the challenges that TPM faced in 2015 that resulted in a dip in the proportion of apprentices who were successful. Consequently, most current apprentices are making good progress.

You and your managers have an accurate and candid understanding of the quality of teaching and training provided across all aspects of provision. Based on this clear understanding, you have introduced a significant number of changes which are improving learners' outcomes, such as the new arrangements to monitor robustly apprentices' progress. Your staff intervene quickly to ensure that apprentices and trainees who fall behind receive effective individual coaching and support. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who have completed their functional skills tests has increased sharply and many trainees are successful.

You and your designated safeguarding officer have a well-developed understanding of the support needs of learners who may be exposed to extremism or radicalisation. You take well-considered measures, such as seeking support from individuals within learners' communities, to help learners resolve any anxieties. As a result, these vulnerable learners stay on their courses, progress and achieve.

You have maintained most of the strengths found at the previous inspection. However, you have not improved all aspects of the provision, for example the arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and training require further improvement.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff have ensured that arrangements to keep apprentices safe are up to date, fit for purpose and implemented well.

Staff at all levels take learners' safety and protection seriously. Learners are confident to report any incidents or safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and pragmatic. For example, your policy to check learners' whereabouts when they are over two hours late has successfully led to the identification and support of trainees and apprentices at risk. Most learners have a clear understanding of how to protect themselves in potentially difficult situations, such as when using social media. You and the designated safeguarding officer's response to issues raised by learners or staff is particularly well considered and balanced.

All staff, including the staff at your subcontractor, have received training on safe practices and how to inform learners about risks. However, a very small minority of trainers do not review and develop learners' understanding of extremism and radicalisation well enough.

## **Inspection findings**

- You have dealt successfully with the significant staffing issues which resulted in the sharp decline of the proportion of apprentices who completed their programme successfully in 2014/15. The new system to review learners' progress every week is highly effective. Staff use apprentices' records on the electronic portfolio to identify quickly any learner who is making slow progress and ensure they then receive the required support and intervention to get them back on track. Consequently, your data indicates that current apprentices' progress is good and achievement rates are returning to previous high rates. Apprentices have a good understanding of their own progress and what they need to do next to achieve in the planned time.
- Your managers have developed and implemented all aspects of the traineeship programme effectively. Learners benefit from well-organised work experience which reflects their interests. They benefit from well-planned teaching of English and mathematics and a detailed personal action plan. Consequently, the proportion of trainees who progress to further education, apprenticeships or employment is improving rapidly.
- Employers speak very highly about the support that trainers provide to apprentices. Apprentices can contact trainers for advice easily by telephone, email or text. Apprentices value their trainers' very quick and effective response to help resolve personal or training issues, for example when at risk of becoming homeless.
- Observers evaluating the quality of teaching and off-the-job coaching do not focus sufficiently on the impact of tutors' and trainers' practices on learners' development. Observers do not identify consistently the strengths and areas for development required in the delivery of training in enough detail.

Consequently, tutors and trainers do not have clear action plans on how they can improve their practices and ensure rapid improvement in the quality of the off-the-job training.

- A few trainers do not ensure that apprentices take sufficient responsibility for producing work to deadlines. As a result, a minority of apprentices do not develop good skills to plan and learn independently. Trainers do not set sufficiently challenging learning or developmental targets to ensure that all apprentices, including the most able, achieve their potential.
- Managers and tutors have developed good links with other training providers to enable apprentices, for example those in childcare, who require a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics to progress in their chosen career. A minority of trainers do not have sufficient confidence and/or competence to help apprentices to develop their English and mathematics in the context of their vocational work. Tutors' and trainers' comments and feedback to apprentices in the electronic portfolio contain too many spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Staff at all levels have improved significantly the number of learners who attend regularly their off-the-job training sessions. Although the proportion of learners who attend well in English, mathematics and information and communications technology lessons has improved considerably since last year, it is not yet good enough.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent pace of improvement in the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications is maintained by ensuring that trainers monitor closely their apprentices' progress and provide effective support and intervention for any learners who fall behind in the completion of their work
- apprentices' and trainees' attendance to lessons and off-the-job training is consistently good
- trainers have sufficient confidence and competence to help apprentices to develop their English and mathematics skills in the context of their vocational work
- trainers' feedback to apprentices in their electronic portfolio do not contain spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors
- observers who evaluate the quality of the off-the-job training focus on the impact of teaching practices on apprentices' learning to identify clearly what needs to improve and share good practice and enable managers to provide effective staff development.

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

Yours sincerely

Shahram Safavi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we were assisted by the operations director, as nominee. We met you, a number of your managers, trainers, trainees and apprentices. We observed training and lessons and looked at apprentices' work. We interviewed a number of your apprentices and reviewed key documents including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of apprentices by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires and by seeking their views during on-site inspection activity.