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Mrs Joan Furnival
Director of Learning
North West Community Services Training Limited
Stopgate Centre
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Dear Mrs Furnival

Short inspection of North West Community Services Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 20 and 21 July 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 North West Community Services Training Limited (the company) was judged to be good in June 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your managers have an accurate understanding of the quality of your provision. You have maintained the strengths identified at your previous inspection and rectified all the areas for improvement. You and your staff have introduced and implemented traineeships successfully and the large majority of trainees progress to employment or further training. Staff at all levels, particularly assessors and tutors, are exceptionally skilful in promoting the values that apprentices and trainees need to live successfully in modern Britain.

Most assessors and tutors use their detailed knowledge of individual apprentices' and trainees' developmental needs to pitch their work at the right level. Consequently, apprentices and trainees, including the most able, make good progress.

Many aspects of the provision have improved significantly, for example the teaching of English and mathematics. However, other aspects require further improvement. A small minority of assessors do not help apprentices to develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills. Too many assessors are not confident enough to extend apprentices' skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

The large majority of apprentices are successful and gain their qualifications within the planned time. However, your data about the performance of different groups of

apprentices, for example apprentices aged 16 to 18, is not accurate. As a result, you are not able to take swift actions to ensure all groups of apprentices achieve equally well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff place a high priority on keeping apprentices and trainees safe. The designated safeguarding officer has ensured that policies and procedures to keep your apprentices and trainees safe are up to date, fit for purpose and implemented effectively. The small number of safeguarding incidents have been recorded and managed well. All staff have undergone the required safeguarding checks and have received training on keeping apprentices and trainees safe. Staff have good knowledge of the potential risks of extremism and radicalisation and use this to ensure that their apprentices and trainees know how to keep themselves safe.

Many apprentices have completed specific training on radicalisation and extremism. Assessors and tutors use current affairs exceptionally well to ensure apprentices and trainees develop a good and secure understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and the values that help them to live in modern Britain. For example, apprentices and trainees understand well how democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs reduce the risk of extremism. The large majority of apprentices and trainees have a clear understanding of how to protect themselves when working online, for example when using the internet or social media.

Inspection findings

- You have taken effective actions to improve the self-assessment process, which was an area for improvement at your previous inspection. The current processes to evaluate the quality of your provision are comprehensive and effective. Feedback from employers and apprentices has been used well, for example to inform improvements in the use of the digital portfolio system.
- You have responded to the recommendations from your previous inspection, and your current action plan provided a helpful platform for further improvement. You have been successful in increasing the capacity of staff to improve their training and teaching skills. Staff are open to new ideas and adapt their teaching methods to increase effectiveness. However, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and training remain. For example, despite the long-established peer observation arrangements, a minority of assessors still do not set clear learning targets for apprentices.
- All aspects of the traineeship programme have been developed and implemented well. Staff provide trainees with effective advice and guidance, including referral to other providers who offer training in vocational areas that you do not offer. Staff ensure that trainees benefit from work experience that reflects their interests and developmental needs. For example, trainees who need to enhance their self-confidence are placed with employers who are especially effective in nurturing trainees with low self-esteem. Trainees 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 good.

- Assessors use their experience well to ensure that training and individual coaching link effectively to apprentices' workplaces. For example, assessors ensure apprentices working in nurseries understand and can apply theories on child development in their work. Most assessors have high expectations of apprentices and set them challenging tasks to stretch apprentices' knowledge and skills. For instance, the most able intermediate apprentices study units for advanced qualifications.
- A small number of assessors, when checking apprentices' knowledge, offer answers too quickly. Consequently, they do not allow apprentices to develop their independent thinking skills well enough. A minority of assessors are not sufficiently confident in using ICT; therefore, they do not encourage apprentices to develop their ICT skills. As a result, only a small minority of apprentices enrol on functional skills in ICT beyond the level required by their qualifications. Although apprentices and trainees receive effective oral feedback, a minority of assessors do not ensure that apprentices and trainees have recorded feedback on their work or take notes. Consequently, a significant minority of apprentices and trainees cannot learn from their previous mistakes and make repeated errors.
- Provision in English and mathematics has improved significantly. You have increased the company's capacity to develop apprentices' and trainees' skills in English and mathematics by recruiting two qualified teachers to deliver these subjects. Apprentices who require a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics to progress in their chosen career, for example childcare or teaching assistant apprentices, benefit from good-quality teaching. Apprentices make good progress relative to their low starting points towards gaining their GCSE qualifications in both English and mathematics.
- You and your assessors have ensured that, in 2014/15, the proportion of apprentices who completed was good. The proportion who completed within the planned time was also good. Based on your in-year data, in 2015/16, a higher proportion of apprentices than in 2014/15 should be successful.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers have accurate information about the performance of different groups of apprentices and trainees, so that they can ensure all groups achieve equally well
- arrangements to identify and share best practice are successful, so that teaching, training and assessment are always effective
- assessors have sufficient confidence and competence to extend apprentices' skills in ICT and encourage more apprentices to take courses in functional skills in ICT beyond their qualifications' requirements, so that apprentices' employment and progression prospects are enhanced
- assessors and tutors ensure that apprentices and trainees have a record of the feedback on the quality of their work, so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve.

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