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Mr Mark Hewitt  
Managing Director  
TRN (Train) Ltd  
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Gateshead  
NE11 0EF

Dear Mr Hewitt

### **Short inspection of TRN (Train) Ltd**

Following the short inspection on 21 and 22 February 2017, 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 the provider was judged to be good in June 2013.

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

Since the last inspection, you and your senior management team have continued to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, with the result that an increasing proportion of your learners achieve their qualifications. As the sole owner and managing director of the training company, you set high standards for the performance of your staff and are ambitious for your learners to succeed. You have a very good understanding of the strengths of your provision and those areas where improvements still need to take place, and you communicate these effectively to your staff. The change in ownership of the company, and the subsequent restructure of the management team that you instigated, has provided you with the capacity to sustain and build on the recent improvements you have made.

A real strength of your approach is the manner in which you have grown and reshaped your curriculum in response to the needs of employers and the priorities of the two main local enterprise partnerships in the areas where you deliver. This growth is considered carefully, based on thorough labour market research and consultation with key partners, and has not been at the expense of the quality of your provision. In health and social care, the main subject area that you deliver, you have recently introduced higher-level apprenticeships to meet the demand to develop the skills of managers in the sector. You have established an advanced clinical health care qualification to address the emerging needs for this type of care in non-hospital settings. You have just started a traineeship programme for learners

aged 16 to 19 in direct response to the demands of the local construction industry for job-ready bricklayers and labourers. This has grown out of your already successful construction-based employability programme for unemployed adults.

You receive a high volume of positive feedback from your learners and other key partners, such as employers. Apprentices and learners enjoy their teaching sessions, and are appreciative of the care and support they receive from their assessors and trainers. The great majority of your learners achieve positive destinations both during and after completing their programmes. A third of your apprentices secure a promotion at work, or gain additional responsibilities because of their recently acquired skills and knowledge. A significant number of apprentices progress onto a higher-level qualification. Just over a third of your adult learners, many of whom are long-term unemployed, find work on local construction sites after completing their short employability course with you.

You and your management team have been largely effective in tackling the main areas for improvement found at the last inspection, but a few areas still need further work, and some new areas have emerged that need to be addressed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and take appropriate actions to safeguard learners. As a result, learners report that they feel safe while attending courses and at the many widely dispersed premises of the employers where they work or are on placement.

Safeguarding procedures and policies are comprehensive and up to date, and are reviewed regularly by senior managers. The company has enough appropriately trained designated safeguarding officers to ensure that there is always someone for learners and staff to contact if they have any concerns. All relevant staff have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks that are renewed every three years. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding issues, such as forced marriage, to ensure that they can spot the early signs of abuse.

There is an effective system for reporting incidents, which learners know how to use. Assessors and trainers are vigilant in safeguarding their learners and service users in care homes. They report any instances of poor practice that they observe in homes to their line managers and support their learners to use the safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures of their employers to alert them to their concerns. Managers have good links with other agencies to whom they can refer learners, such as those suffering from domestic violence.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since the last inspection, the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has increased significantly, as has the proportion who do so within their planned timescales. As a result, both overall and timely achievement rates are well above those of other similar providers. However, in 2015/16 the

proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications within their planned timescales declined, particularly among adult apprentices in health and social care. Managers were quick to identify the causes for this decline and acted promptly to tackle them. Through their effective performance management arrangements, managers were aware of a number of assessors whose apprentices were not making good progress and took appropriate actions to remove them from the organisation. Managers also stopped working with a number of employers in the domiciliary care sector who refused to give their employees time off for study. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who are currently on track to complete their qualifications within their planned timescales is returning to its previous high level.

- Managers have successfully revised their self-assessment process to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. There is now far greater involvement and consultation of all key partners in the various stages of self-assessment. This includes a major survey of employers and learners, both online and through face-to-face meetings, which provides managers with a rich source of feedback on the quality of their provision. The revised process also ensures that staff are clear about what areas need to be further improved. Consequently, the current self-assessment report is based securely on evidence and is an accurate evaluation of the provider's strengths and weaknesses.
- Observers of teaching, learning and assessment are now more adept at using the outcomes of observations to set specific and detailed actions for assessors and trainers to help them to improve their practice. The small number of assessors who were not performing well in their first few observations have been supported to improve. The observation reports were a key part of the process of identifying those assessors whose apprentices were not making fast enough progress. However, observers do not give specific enough timescales for the completion of actions, so assessors' improvement actions can drift for too long and weaker practice goes unchecked.
- Assessors and trainers now make effective use of the findings from initial assessment to plan programmes that support most apprentices and learners, who have different prior educational attainment and vocational experience, to make good progress. Assessors and trainers provide the majority of apprentices and learners with opportunities to develop additional skills and qualifications to boost their employment prospects and their chances of promotion at work. For example, health and social care apprentices take additional units in subjects such as infection control, the storage of medicines and end of life care. Many apprentices on level 2 qualifications can opt for units at level 3 to give them additional challenge. The assessment of adult learners on the construction employability course identifies effectively their different skills levels, so trainers can set more complex brickwork tasks for the more proficient.
- Assessors do not provide sufficient challenge for a small minority of the most-able apprentices to extend their skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the qualification. The targets set for these apprentices, and the written feedback that assessors give them, are not sufficiently precise or do not have enough depth to enable apprentices to push their skills and knowledge development to their full potential. Assessors do not develop the written English skills of their

apprentices enough; they take the view that many apprentices can function adequately with the skills that they already have, despite the need for correct written communication in areas such as health and social care. Assessors are more successful in developing their apprentices' mathematical skills.

- Assessors and trainers are now much more confident than at the time of the last inspection at promoting equality and diversity through their teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have introduced a range of 'hot topics' and provided assessors with good quality training resources to use seamlessly at reviews and in taught sessions. As a result, apprentices and adult learners are more aware of how an appreciation of diversity helps them in their relationships with colleagues at work and in recognising the different needs of service users. The use of female trainers in the construction workshop promotes positive role models and challenges stereotypes.
- Managers have effectively implemented a 'Prevent' duty action plan after conducting a full risk assessment. All staff are trained to identify learners at potential risk of radicalisation and extremism, although to date there has been no cause to use the Channel process to report any concerns. Apprentices and adult learners develop a good level of awareness of the issues of radicalisation and extremism through their induction onto programmes and at reviews. However, learners on the traineeship programme confuse issues relating to 'Prevent' with equality and diversity, which is not helped by some poorly designed and delivered materials in their induction handbook.
- The recently introduced traineeship programme fully meets the principles and requirements for this provision type. Managers developed the programme in response to specific demands of local construction companies for bricklayers and site labourers, with many of these employers providing work experience placements. The trainees are highly motivated to achieve by the strong employment focus of the programme. However, trainers have not yet set specific targets for individual trainees that take enough account of their different starting points and their need to develop a range of personal and employability skills, as well as the achievement of their vocational qualifications. In theory lessons, trainers do not check sufficiently the knowledge and understanding of trainees. For example, when using questions, trainers did not probe the trainees' understanding enough, often answering the questions themselves before moving onto the next topic.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all actions from observations of teaching, learning and assessment have specific dates for completion so that managers can more effectively support the development of assessors and trainers
- assessors offer more in-depth written feedback and set more developmental targets to their most-able apprentices so that they can fully extend their skills and knowledge

- assessors develop the English skills of their apprentices so that they can communicate clearly and accurately in their written work
- the induction process for the traineeship programme is made more relevant to the lives of younger learners, with better designed resources to illustrate the importance of safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism
- trainers delivering the traineeship programme set targets in the trainees' individual learning plans that take more account of the development of each individual's personal and employability skills as well as their vocational aims; they develop more skilful questioning techniques to check their trainees' understanding in theory lessons.

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

Dr Charles Searle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors were assisted by the managing director as nominee. They held meetings with a range of managers, tutors, assessors, apprentices, learners and employers. Inspectors carried out observations of teaching, learning and assessment, and conducted walk-throughs of courses to explore particular themes. They scrutinised learners' work and assessment records and key documents relating to the provider's strategy and implementation plans, self-assessment and improvement plans, and safeguarding records. Inspectors considered the views of learners through discussions during learning sessions visited and through responses received through Ofsted's online questionnaire.